

Theatre Australia

Marvellous Melbourne Part 2

Interview: Nancye Hayes

Hello world, this is Sondheim

Regional Theatre

plus reviews, ballet,
opera, film &c.



**Musical
Theatre
in Australia**

NIMROD

Nimrod Theatre
300 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills Sydney 2010

Until Sunday 30 October
Nimrod Upstairs

JACK

by Jim McNeil
directed by Ken Horler
designed by Larry Eastwood
John Clayton, Barbara Daniels, Martin Harris,
Malcolm Keith
The private hell of a perceptive survivor from Long
Bay, Parramatta and Grafton goes

until Sunday 9 October
Nimrod Downstairs

FANSHEN

by David Hare
based on the book by William Hinton
directed by Richard Wharmett
Alan Becker, Tim Burns, Margaret Cameron,
Niko Lathouris, John Lys, Suzanne Royston,
George Shevtsov, Bill Summers, Stephen Thomas
'Revolution in a Chinese Village: Watch out, there's
sods in the bed' — R J Petersen

Second Seasonal Year
Playbox Melbourne

Gordon Chater The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin

by Steve J Spence
directed by Richard Wharmett
designed by Larry Eastwood
Winner of Four National Professional Theatre Awards
and Three National Critics' Awards
Gordon Chater in this Nimrod production moves to
London's West End next March.
Now presented by Parachute Productions.

from Saturday 22 October
Nimrod Downstairs

Ashes

by David Rudkin
directed by Ken Horler
A superb and overwhelmingly eloquent account of a
childless marriage
Cast to be announced

from Wednesday 2 November
Nimrod Upstairs
A Visiting Production from
The Marlowe Theatre of Australia

ALDI IN WONDER LAND

Balcan puppeteer Richard Goodshaw takes a trans-
lation of 'Alice's Adventures' into Pappapeterson as the
basis for his shadow production. Alice does will find
the setting transported to the center of Australia with
the frog faced man (the frog lookman), the Kangaroo
(the white rabbit), the Koala (the doormouse) and
the Wack Spirit (Queen of Hearts)

from Saturday 3 December
Nimrod Upstairs

THE CLUB

by David Williamson
directed by John Bell
designed by Tom Burrenman
Jeff Aubrey, Drew Forsythe, Ron Graham,
Ron Haddock, Iain Kants, Barry Lavett
David Williamson lifts the lid off the backroom
politics, the buying and selling, backstabbing and
bulldozing that regulate the life of a suburban
football club



Theatre

Australia

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COMMENT

Theatre has always been most closely associated with the way of life of capital cities, and a certainly has no major locations within them in Australia. Though London, New York, Paris, etcetera, are well known as theatre centres there are other important theatre companies operating in other areas throughout their respective countries, just as in Australia there are companies working outside capitals whose contributions and value must not be overlooked.

There are many amateur companies very active in the regions, and it is at times suggested that these fulfil the only function that theatre can outside capital cities, that the regions they provide catering for the unsophisticated tastes of provincials and people go because they are involved with the group, whereas they would not be interested in going along to professional theatre per se. This is very misleading. Both of the ventures mentioned above, and the Rosemere Theatre Company at Wagga (not trade) have proved that regional professional theatre is both needed and wanted. Amateur societies have their own very important function, but a full-time theatre company maintains a standard of excellence that can only be reached by people who devote their entire working life to theatre.

Of course various touring productions come to the provincial towns with some regularity, but these are in no way a substitute for a permanent theatre company in a community. Just as city theatre caters to the particular taste of its citizens, so theatre in country areas speaks to those around it because it is a part of them. Terry Clarke says in his article on the HVTC that Newcastle felt the company to be a Sydney concept foisted upon it, and it was not until the actors decided to remain in Newcastle although the company had gone into recess, determined to fight for a resident theatre company in Newcastle, that the town really took them to its heart.

There has been much feeling of gloom and doom about the results of these early experiments in regional theatre. The mid of the Old Tour's Arrendale project after six months is certainly not due to any failure, it was scheduled to run for that length of time and appears to have been successful beyond all expectations. So much so that their *Orville* has had a brief revival in Sydney and the project will be started up again next year for a further period. There is to be a full report on past achievements and future plans in the next issue in the second part of our look at regional theatre.

With the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, in pure case terms the venture has been a success, though celebration is an argument and not a filler of coffers. The fog of gloom and doom seems at last to be clearing and a low cost programme (see Terry Clarke *Quarter and Quarter*) is in hand to get the company active again.

Arrendale had much more money and a big budget back in Sydney to turn to Hunter Valley was on its own with a small grant and suffered many setbacks beyond its control. At Wagga the *Australian Council* and NSW Government share the cost of the two professional ventures, their success is an actually making a profit, at the box office.

All three companies have proven that what the regions respond to is not artistic condemnation but cheering theatre. Arrendale had their touring up in drivers for *Orville* and a gripping *Orlando*, Hunter Valley and Rosemere have both had an outstanding response to *Arrendale On Ice*. They cannot get away with the inept and pretentious, there just aren't the entire groups of trustees around to support such programming.

But of all, the Hunter Valley is perhaps the most important — which is why the profession has not been around with benefits to support it. It alone is a fully professional company trying to work all the year around. And the eyes of the federal funding agencies and cultural departments are cast to see whether it can be made a go of before putting in its their own art. If it runs second or the cause of decentralisation of theatre will be set back twenty years.

At another end of the scale it's good to see an all Australian company of actors coming together for what is shaping up towards a very stylish production of a collage of Southern material. *Sole In Sole In Southern*. And good that the Theatre Royal which has had some difficulties finding suitable shows, is being used as the venue for such a highly acclaimed musical tribute. The basic material might not be overgrown, but virtually everything else in *Recognition* of our own stars is happening at last. Regional theatre is an issue that has come very much to the fore in the last few months, as two projects, that of the Old Tourback Arrendale project, and the Newcastle Hunter Valley Theatre Company have been seen to come to a close in one way or another.

Theatre Australia

Editor: Robert Page

Executive Editor: Lucy Wagner

Associate Editor: Bruce Langford

Assistant: Angela Farrell

Advisory Board

John Bell, Graham Bondell, Ellen Bayle, Katherine Bryson, Nancy Chabrow, Gordon Chater, John Clark, W. A. Joseph, Lynda Gray, Jack Hubbard, Ann Hordy, George Hutchinson, Robert Jephson, Philip Mason, Stan Marks, John Newby, Phil Poljan, Raymond Pridmore, Philip Rivers, (From Here) Ken Southgate, Raymond Stanley, Michael Trevitt, John Turtur, Tony French, Graham Worth, Richard Wherrell.

Publisher: John Curran
Art Director: Ada Scott

Correspondents

Sydney: Sue Vanger (01) 454 2044
Melbourne: Raymond Stanley (01) 419 1294
Brisbane: Don Hutchins (07) 289 3003
Perth: Joan Armstrong (08) 94 6619
Adelaide: Michael Morley (08) 175 1204

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The passing of *The Independent*

Toni Reed

An era of Australian theatre history came to a grinding halt on Wednesday 6 July 1973, when the Independent Theatre was forced to close its doors for the last time. This theatre which had almost become an institution in Sydney's North Shore had been fading slowly for the past few years and it was virtually a matter of time before the final crunch came.

The Independent Theatre, which was established in 1930 has a remarkable and considerable history. The theatrical situation in Australia in which this theatre was nurtured gave it its tough skin and ability to survive in the face of almost any crisis. It was in an atmosphere of profit-seeking commercial managers, talking parsons and the Great Depression that Dora Finon founded what was to become one of the most distinguished theatres in Sydney, and for some time Sydney's only permanent group.

The policy of the theatre from its inception, was to present the world's best plays as well as developing Australian talent in the full theatrical sphere of acting, directing and writing.

From 1930 to 1939 the Independent appeared in various city locations, including the Conservatorium of Music. In June 1939, Mr Harold Bowles, General Manager of J.C. Williamson, was looking for a new tenant with a well-established reputation. It was a theatre he had in North Sydney. Later that year the Independent took over the building despite the queries arising from members who were doubtful about its success in the obscurely unknown North Shore. These fears were soon quelled as it became obvious that the Independent's reputation had carried them comfortably into the new premises.

Saturday 3 September 1939, was chosen as the opening night. The theatre opened to a crowded house with *French Without Tears*. At midnight Britain declared war on Germany and the Second World War had begun. The very fact that this new venture on the North Shore was able to withstand the deprivations and hardships of war is proof enough of the grip it had in the Sydney community.

Dora Finon's policy of presenting at least one Australian play a year certainly brought results when in 1941 *Betsy Baggins*

by Sumner Locke Elliott reached the stage. *Betsy Baggins* had been turned down by professional and amateur managements until finally taken up by Dora Finon where it broke all box office records at the Independent. It was then taken over by commercial management which toured it for three years in Australia and New Zealand.

This was just one example of the way the Independent took the precedent in many new and exciting productions which commercial managements were not usually prepared to back.

Some other extremely successful productions include — *Mourning Becomes Emma*, *Black Clowns*, *The Fant*, *Our Town* and *A Touch of Silk*.

The Independent Theatre began a policy of regular Saturday afternoon children's matinees in 1945. This has been consistently successful in its introduction and development of young theatrical audiences.

The School of Dramatic Art founded in 1940 was an integral part of the theatre which encouraged and trained local talent. Some ex-students include Reg Livermore, Jill Patterson and Adrian Briffin.

The theatre thrived during its heyday of thirty odd years but over the last six years its popularity dropped considerably. Possible explanations include a waning audience experimenting with new theatres and the Independent's loss of effectiveness. Due to lack of finance only a core staff was maintained — director, theatre manager, stage manager, technical and cleaner. For five people to maintain such a theatre is a Herculean job.

Dora Finon, the extraordinary lady, who founded and often carried this theatre devoted herself entirely and unflinchingly to it. In 1946, *The Fant Lady of Australia Theatre* was honoured with an OBE for her service to theatre.

The principal trouble which culminated in the final collapse of the theatre was its dependence on government grants which as best were irregular and uncertain. The Independent, seemed to become the 'Cinderella' of Sydney theatres.

The Independent Theatre's contribution to Australian theatre is immeasurable as not only did it bridge a gap during the decline of the professional theatre but it also gave the Australian audience good theatre which it would otherwise have gone without.

It was an unknown quantity when it first began but over the years many of its ideas and innovations became the province of other theatres. It is very sad to see this

piece of an era. One can only hope that something will rise from its ashes.

Alan Schneider, visiting director

Barry Eaton

For the last few years the Peter Samaras Foundation has imported a theatrical talent to work with local actors and directors on a workshop basis. Names like Stella Adler, William Caskill and Michael Blakemore have now been joined by Alan Schneider from the United States. During July Mr Schneider working with up and coming directors and actors who volunteered to be 'used'. The whole word was the works of Samuel Beckett.

A formidable task.

To say Alan Schneider is well known in the theatre is to underplay his importance. He has directed over 100 productions in regional theatre, off and on Broadway. He has produced all of Samuel Beckett's plays as well as most of Pinter and Brecht in the US.

He directed Alfred's *Wife's Afraid of Fanny Wood* originally, for which he won the Tony Award, in the same year he won the Obie for Pinter's *The Dumbwaiter* and *The Collection* — the only director to have won both awards in the same year.

At present he is the Director of the drama drama of the Julliard School at the Lincoln Center. His credentials are flawless.

I attended one of his workshops at the NIDA theatre in Sydney and spent three fascinating hours. The man is a pro. His whole approach to directing and acting is really so simple and logical you wonder why you hadn't thought of it before. This is part of Alan Schneider's philosophy. Often what is so obvious is the hardest to see.

He works with his directors and actors in a very close way, talking with them, often asking and dragging the response from them. Making them do the work and keep the focus. But never in a strict, know-it-all way.

You must respect the man. He talks such obvious sense and does it in an interesting manner. A former actor himself he uses theatrically in great advantage when instructing.

What does he hope to achieve with the three week workshop? I put this to him after the first week.

"I hope that at the end of three weeks I will leave them with something to think about for future reference. The application of that something will take the rest of their lives, just as it takes the rest of mine. I haven't achieved ultimate truth which I'm transmitting to the next generation. I am struggling with something that I am sharing with other people and their struggle is constant."

The main aim is to give them another perspective, another point of view about dancing.

There is no such thing as an isolated course in dancing to Schneider. However he does have a few questions which have come up to be ignored as Schneider's law.

"Ideally there is not a place to reproduce life but to mimic it, or make it more interesting. To do this you add variety in a subtle way. For instance on my productions if an actor goes up from a curtain chair, moves to the fire and then returns to his seat, I direct him to sit in a different chair. That's Schneider's law on movement."

"What about another law?"

"Not to let anybody notice that you're doing these things, I suppose."

The Peter Sacramento Foundation has been exposing young dancers to experienced overseas directors for seven years now. What effect has this had?

"It's very hard to judge what observable effect this has had," says Jacqueline Rott. "Just working with these people must have had a good effect eventually."

This is Alan Schneider's philosophy, an overworking of ideas. He travels a lot, always observing, but always ready to get of himself.

He is searching for an Australian play to produce in America, having done two in the past — *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and *Alias Jane's Zoo*.

After his Australian stint Alan Schneider returns to the U.S. to direct *Another Country* for the Acting Company which is a national classical repertory company which tours all over the U.S.A. for forty weeks a year and also plays a month in New York.

Nancye Hayes:

"I keep getting rediscovered . . ."

Barry Eaton

Nancye Hayes is a dedicated, talented and hard-working actress. That almost says it all, just like a publicity headline. Life in the theatre at best could be described as up and down, but for Nancye it is like being a ping-pong ball.

"I keep getting rediscovered every few years," she says. "It all started with the chorus of *My Fair Lady* working as a dancer. Three few years later *Sweet Charity* and the Hollywood type step to stardom and critical fame."



[And the usual great things about that!]

"Well, I know that those kinds of parts won't be going to come along every time. Over in America they have people writing especially for individual talents in the musical theatre. Big parts in musicals don't come up every day though and even Gwen Vandora didn't work in a big show for many years after *Charity*."

Many people think that Nancye Hayes was into great periods of "rising" after *Charity*. In reality she worked for various theatre companies around Australia in a great variety of roles.

"I have also been in some long runs," Nancye recalls. "*Pippin*, *Amos* and *Some Time Next Year*." Her last three major productions are far twelve months each.

There have been a few slow patches in the past, but there again not a lot was happening at the time.

Does she feel ahead at all at the way things turned out after *Sweet Charity*?

"People tend to think you shouldn't do certain things because they're not starring roles. I don't believe in that. I just love working. I find it boring not to work. Sometimes the smaller roles I've done, like in *Promises Promises* and *Pippin* have been very rewarding."

She tries not to think about what might have been. "If you get better than I think you become boring."

In the slack times Nancye doesn't sit around waiting for the phone to ring. She goes back to classes and also teaches dancing to children.

"I hit the doldrums sometimes," she admits, "but then I give myself a lesson and get myself out again." At the moment with musicals not exactly plentiful, Nancye is about to be rediscovered again.

She's appearing in Sydney at the Miroslav Theatre in *Alma de Groen* in new

play *Going Home*. She plays the part of Molly who is a rather large lady — "I have to wear lots of padding, and I get all night," laughs Nancye. "I have to diet all day, or I'll end up like Molly at the end of the season! With my luck they'll say, can you be ready to do a dancing role in two weeks — a dancing elephant?"

Playing a straight character role in a theatre like Miroslav is important to Nancye at this stage of her career. She believes actors should never stop learning right through their career. She understandably returns to the musical area to illustrate her point.

"I think it's important for actors to learn to sing and dance, even if they never use it. The Americans particularly do all the classes all over the place and they are into every facet of theatre. Whereas here, I suppose because the musical tradition hasn't been considered a very prestigious thing by many actors, they go — Oh, Musical!"

So then she launches into a great dance taken about the musical overtones and her eyes light up at the mere thought of doing another one.

Is there another side of Nancye Hayes to be discovered?

"I would like to do a film," says Nancye, "but apart from that not long."

Her mood seems of humour than takes over. "Well, I don't play the violin, I don't think I'd like to do *Sweet Charity* on ice, become an acrobat or join a circus. Although if I had to do it for a show I'd say — I can do that. Then I'd go on and learn it!"

This is Nancye Hayes' attitude to theatre and to life. Always say you can do it, even if it does get you into strife sometimes.

“QUOTES & QUERIES”

ARMEDALE CARRY-OVER

PAUL NEWBY: "Now that I am working here for the HVTC many people are asking what has happened to the Armadale Project, so may I say once and for all that the project was only ever a pilot scheme to last for six months. However there has been a substantial amount of carry-over of activities. The ATP is maintaining a one week session of *Ghetto*, at the NIDA, theatre in August and providing 16 weeks back-up work for schools in the New England region. The whole project has in my view been a huge success and I look forward to its renewal and growth in 1978. We shall be producing a full report for the next issue of *Theatre Australia*."

VISITOR FOR GORKI

BILL L. SHANAHAN, Administrator for the Old Tote: "We are proud to announce the visit of Leon Czok, arguably one of the world's top five directors, to the Old Tote to direct *The Lower Depths* by Gorki at

the Drama Theatre in November.

"He is an architect, set designer, stage and screen actor and director who emerged in the late 1950's as one of the intellectual new wave of European directors, combining a highly physicalised style with an intellectual and emotional refinement. His major work has been in his native Czechoslovakia. He has a famed *Lucia Starda* Belgrade Theatre in a vast range of classical and contemporary works from around the world, and control to the resurgence of innovative theatre in post-war Eastern Europe.

"Foreign jobs are hard to get. Mr Czok having guest directed at a number of West German theatres, and work at North America with *Lower and Lower* for the Arena Stage Washington in 1974 and for Vancouver Canada. One of his films *Forest of the Wounded* (1965) gained him the Best Director Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival. The *Lower Depths* runs for seven weeks from 16 November and will be designed by fellow Romanian *Ilsewath Stancu*."

HYTC FLAG FLIES

BERNICE CLARKE, Artistic Director HVTC: "The interruption in the activities of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company has thankfully only been short. In the interim the actors have stayed together under separate auspices to present *Mac the Filth* at a local theatre restaurant. Now we plan to mount a festive season under HVTC which will open at Armadale for four days at the Teatro then come to Newcastle for a up and possibly eight work run. While this is going on we can prepare for a marriage production to open in late October. Probably this will be presented at our first house the Arts/Drama Theatre at the University. With that on, lectures and community activities would be a real possibility during the day. Benefit performances at various theatres, with more to come at other major theatres throughout Australia, have been of enormous significance in getting the company back on the road. Normal show could \$7500 and a local amateur company (Newcastle

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MR LAWSON AND MR RAMSAY

ROBIN RAMSAY: "Perusing a short work by Professor Manning Clark, I noticed the description of Henry Lawson: 'An Australian Merin — an innocent bush boy and a devil. Looking at Lawson with this Manning Clarkism in mind, it gave the man entirely new and colourful dimensions. As I researched him more and more I realised the stunning possibilities of combining Mr Lawson's writing with Mr Ramsay's performing — and soon I had the basis of what seemed to be an extraordinary show: being able to keep away from the painful 'book' whip among the waste' syndrome, it researched his trip to London — his drill observations about the English folk, and found very funny points in the oddities ways — including one poem written by Lawson as a grocery boy to Lyn Corran's grocery."

Robin Ramsay's one man Henry Lawson show *The Starvel From the Bush* again at the Russell Street Theatre, Melbourne on 29 September.

NEW COMPANY'S PACKAGE SHOWS

JOSEPHINE ARCHIBALD, Manager, the Australian Stage Company: "The Australian Stage Company is a new venture created by a group of professionals who are taking an innovative approach to the production of exciting new theatre."

"The aim is to create packaged shows designed to meet the requirements of touring organisations and thus to provide flexibility without the enormous overheads normally involved. Each production will be built around some professionals and generate its own audience. Yet it is not to be merely ad hoc but provide dramatic vehicles to test and highlight the skills of performers and provide a focal point for the stimulation of further activity in the Australian theatre."

"The founding members are Robyn Archer, Laurence Archibald, Wal Cherry, John Gader, Silver Harris, George Whaley and a business consultant Angus Simpson. The first season is to be presented by the Sydney Opera House Trust in the Recording Hall (August 22nd-27th) and by the Customs Civic Centre Trust (September 12th-15th). The show is

Never Too Young, an entertainment based on the works of Rudyard Kipling and Herbert Broome, compiled by John Wallat and directed by Wal Cherry.

"The company will stage works from Australia and overseas in one dedication and to ideologies but to their potential to excite both audience and the company itself."

FROM NATIONAL TO INTERNATIONAL

KAREN MERRIE, Director, National Theatre, Perth who has a Churchill Fellowship for an month. "After I resign the current directorship of the National Theatre, Perth I will be going to Great Britain in January and I intend to visit as many theatres as I possibly can. The itinerary isn't finalised, but I will certainly be making a good many experimental theories, and talking to their directors. In addition I am particularly interested in the regional theatres, as I feel their problems are probably more similar to ours. I will be looking into how the companies are run — not only seeing plays, but covering the broad spectrum. And I plan to go to France and Germany and possibly Scandinavia."

SIDING THE LIGHT

DAVID READ has been brought to Australia by the Old Tote assisted by the Australia Council. His major work has been as lighting designer for the B.S.C. including work with Peter Brook, David Jones and Terry Hands. Four World Theatre Seasons at the Alhambra have been his responsibility and occasional lighting design for the Moscow Art Theatre and Actors Studio of New York when in London.

"All the lighting designers I have ever known and I include myself say that you cannot teach lighting design. We are probably right but even if it cannot be taught it has to be learned. My function for the next year, then, is to assist the variety of students who arrive at our little hut at Kooragang Island to learn how to design lighting for the theatre."

"There is of course a basic set of rules which can be learned like those which apply to cooking. The art of lighting has something to do with knowing how to bend and even the rules and to produce a memorable meal rather than something just to eat."

"Course like cooking, course like produce great chefs and lighting courses don't produce great lighting designers but both can produce a person with the ability to succeed and the confidence to fail."

APOLOGY

In the July *Theatre Australia*, "Whoppers, Rumours and Facts", reference was made to the pre-publicity for *Torment's Torment* in Melbourne. The comments were not intended as a criticism of any individual and if so interpreted it remained with apologies.

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by John Aronson, directed by Doug Anderson

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Ray Stanley's

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



Forrest Rudolph — who wrote the screen-plays for *High Rolling* and the forthcoming *Body Count*, has been contacted by Hargrove to write a sequel to *High Rolling* tentatively titled *Tow Truckers* and has another script likely to be filmed by Bert (Peter St Delong) — tells me it's his ambition to write a play for the stage, believing it "to be the form where one can really be oneself." How about one of the subeditorial companies commissioning a play from Forrest? Meanwhile, don't be surprised if David Williamson writes a play for a commercial management.

Still on the subject of playwrights understood from Steve J. Speer that his play *King Richard*, set in the future and

workshopped at the recent Playwrights' Conference, has been taken up by the Old Time. The Nurell's production of *Christmas Breakers* by Rex Hunt, performed by Peter Carroll, is to be presented by Hospitals in Melbourne next year. With it will be another Murray play, *Parsons Swingers*, both plays directed by John Bell. Could be John and wife Anna Volkin may even act in the latter time-bangled, which would mark only their second stage appearances in Melbourne.

Lorraine Bayley of the TV serial *The Sullivans* may be back on stage again around Christmas time, either in Melbourne or Sydney. And Andrew MacFarlane (John Sullivan) who comes out of the serial week, also hopes once again to appear "live". See Ken Shorter in the London cast of the Round House production of Tennessee Williams' *For One Doomed Summer's Sigh*, which has transferred to the Phoenix.

Caroline Gillmer and John O'May, taking an overseas trip during a break before their 20th and 40th Year Jive tour, had introductions to producers in New York and London arranged by Kevin Brodnick. 30s co-star John Dredrich will be playing Dave Frouse's husband in the film on the screenist's life. ... John Tasker spending 12 weeks in Papua-New Guinea as consultant to the Papua-New Guinea Dance and Theatre Company. Incredibly he

remains John will be directing Gluck's *Defence of Socrates in Cambridge*.

Remember that Melbourne's Last Laugh Theatre Movement is brewing up a show that will feature some members of the Hyde Park Show from the A.P.C.

Seems as if Murray broke some bad office records in Melbourne for Michael highly International and P.C. Williamson Productions.

Derek Glynn, who was the old JCW company's rap in London, has had such a large success with the Musical *Marlene* (in association with Michael Edgley, it's a shame critics be it to back — in tandem with Michael — presenting other attractions. I've even heard whippers of *Bohème* Barker perhaps coming out in a play.

Marian Street are following up their successes in the small east coastal area with *Pha* to open their '78 season, perhaps it will follow in the footsteps of *Paravento* which is just finishing an incredibly successful nationwide tour. They'll have to find a very distant or kind of success to play the lead.

In the "Whatever Happened To?" Dept. When Gary Filer played the lead in the MTC's *City Saver* his name was on the lips of everyone who saw the play, expressing raves for his performance. One expected him to be stopped up and given some other major role. But since *City Saver* not a word about him. Where are you Gary? What are you doing?

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Musical Theatre in Australia

The most popular, and subsequently the most financially successful form of theatre in Australia must be the musical comedy. Since the beginning of the century this country has produced, or imported, world class presentations of the best (and sometimes less forgotten) musicals from Broadway and the West End. In fact, since 1900, over 300 musicals have been professionally produced in Australia. Do you know how many of these shows were written by Australians? About 40. And that's the good news! The bad news is that out of these 40 shows, only 13 have been seen in more than one state. And when you find that one of our most popular and frequently viewed musicals is *Aladdin* *De la Rue* — it boggles the mind. So why is it, when we have a perfectly respectable reputation for straight plays, that we can't turn out a *My Fair Lady* type musical but if I know the answer to this question, I'd be writing the show instead of this article, but at least we can cheer ourselves up by looking at what we have accomplished.

1934 was the year that it all started. After 30 years of imported musical theatre, a gentleman named F.W. Thring (Frank's father) came into theatrical management, leaving the Princess Theatre in Melbourne and the New York in Sydney, and presenting the first All Australian musical, *Chin! Chin* starring the one and only Gladys Moncreff! With a book by T. Stuart Gurr, costed around an annual one in NSW, and songs, mostly by Vancie Mack, the production also boasted Australia's first revolving stage, which contributed much excitement to the show once the cast of 64 learned how to walk on a without falling over. *Chin! Chin* played in packed houses chiefly because of Miss Moncreff and the talented cast, which included Robert Chisholm, George Wallace, Claude Fleming (who also directed) and Marshall Crosby. Having set the precedent, F.W. Thring engaged Miss Moncreff for his next project, another Australian musical, *The Cadet* tour in 1935. Thring was to present only one more show, *Mother of Pearl* starring Alton Delany, before his death in 1936.

Meanwhile, J.C. Williamson's, not to be outdone, secured the services of Mudge Eley and Cyril Richard and staged *After Tomorrow* *Melody*, with a book by Charles Jahr, who had also contributed songs to *Chin! Chin*. Ironically none of these shows was a source of inspiration for any would be writers, as we were not to see another home grown musical for twenty years.

So we went back to the parade of overseas hits, usually with imported stars. Harry Langdon and Robert Cooze in *Playboy* *Gone* (1936), Milton Mason and Katron Rossell in *I Married An Angel* (1937), Australians Dan Nead and Marie LeVere in *Let's Face It!* (1942), Evelyn Courtenage and Shirley Withers in *Under the Counter* (1946), *Goldilocks* with Robert Morris and Carolyn Adler (1949), *Regulation* with Ken Lennell and Graeme Duffies (1951) and many more. One J.C.W. production of note — in 1947, Jimmy Howard was announced as the star of the new American musical *Anne Get Your Gun*, but something must have come between the lady and her contract as the role went to a young American girl who had been living in Australia for eight years. Apart from making King Henry a star, Anne has been frequent reveller, her providing a vehicle for such proven talents as Nancye Hayes, Tina Turner, Boney Gibson, Gloria Drake (twice) and, currently in Adelaide, English actress Dorothy Vernon.

Meanwhile, back in the halfway, deserted by our non-existent musical theatre scene, a distant named Eddie Samuels wrote a show called *The Waydown* with American performer Carl Randall willing to direct the property. Samuels made a tentative deal with R.W. but the deal stalled for so long that Samuels and Randall looked the recently unemployed *Anne Get Your Gun* show and a cast including the popular comedians, Charles Norman, and mounted the musical at the King's Theatre in Melbourne, opening in 1938. The show was unanimously praised by the critics, particularly the *Art. I. Daily* — a praise Aboriginal comedienne — which naturally brought the house down.

EMI thought enough of the score to record an album some years later, leaving us a lasting memento to a very ambitious project. *Ready River* was unique in that it had a plot written around the songs, rather than the other way around. After thirteen successful plot lines had been discarded, Eddy Diamond presented a story about a group of children at a station in the 1890's after the vicarage's strike. The songs are all traditional and can be replaced at the producer's whim, with the exception of the title song based on Henry Lawson's words, and Helen Palmer's "Ballad of 1891". The show premiered at Melbourne's New Theatre in 1951 and was subsequently seen in all capital cities.

Lola Mason by Alan Burke, opened in a "try-out" production at the Union Theatre in Melbourne in 1958. Set in Madrid in 1935, the story concerns the famous Spanish dancer who comes to love at the peak of its gold fever and experiences the love with her Spider Dance. The combination of Broadway musical type staging and actual dialogue was a little unorthodox, but the score, by Peter Benjamin and Peter Broomhead, included our first hit showstopper, "Saturday Girl", introduced by Neil Fitzpatrick, and other songs ranging from pretty dreadful to very good indeed. When the first restaged the show at the Elisabeth Theatre in a full scale version, their chief mistake was casting English dancer Mary Preston as Lola, as she was too young for the role and a less than brilliant singer. Lola Mason died at a loss of £11,581. A scheduled revival at the Independent Theatre in 1972 featuring Sheila Bradley, Boney Gibson and Peter Carroll might well have given the show a new lease of life had the production occurred.

Although Albert Arlen conducted *The Instrumental* *Style* in 1958 (George Johnston was to write the original script, but dropped out of the project because of prior commitments), the show was not to reach the stage until 1964, when it was presented for a week at Canberra's Albert Hall. Sir Frank Tait and John McCullough caught the last performance and arranged



lar a professional production to play a six week season at Melbourne's Comedy Theatre. The six weeks turned into five months, followed by a nine month tour which grossed over \$250,000. The *Blacks* has continued its success over the years most recently on ABC TV in 1976, starring Graeme Blundell, Geraldine Turner and Nancy Hayes, and the Arlen/Lloyd Thompson/Nancy Brown collaboration is probably one most well known musical.

Two more shows have used Australian history as inspiration. The first, *The Ballad of Angela Grey* (1962) by television writer Jeff Undiehl and Bruce George, dealt with the "push" wars of the 1890's. A great artistic success in its first production at the Ureco starring Kevin Colman, Mary Hardy, Ray Livermore and Marion Edwards, *Angela Grey* took to box office rounds, but frequent revivals indicate the show's continued popularity. *A Rose By Any Name* (originally titled *Friendship With A Rose*, *Angela Grey*) was the successful production at the QTC in 1970, the central character being Governor Lachlan Macquarie. The Rob Ingles-Ruben Wood musical has not been seen outside of Queensland to date.

In recent years, the musical theatre in Australia has prospered greatly, due to the efforts of a small group of people who



Melba Elliot in *Hold My Hand* (1932)

were undaunted by failure and discouraged by their successes.

Don Hasty and Peter Pointe have a lot of credits as long as years are, but only a small portion of the public can claim to

know their work. The Melbourne based writing team enjoyed their first success in the early forties with *A Bush of Bushbuds* and *It Happened in Tarapahara*, a spoof on Hollywood musicals of the 40s. *Tarapahara* resurfaced some years later as a revised version under the title *Red Hair and Ringer* (featuring Pamela Gibbons as Vera Constant, a Broadway movie star). Their next project, *Caroline*, conceived by Lesly Blake who also played the lead role of Caroline Chesham, was produced at St. Martins Theatre in 1971 with the assistance of a \$48,000 special projects grant from Sir Henry Bollen. *Sweet Fanny Adams*, their last full scale musical to date, played a successful season at Melbourne's La Chat Noir Theatre Restaurant. Set in the 1930's and dealing with the rivalry between two machines, Betty Long and Fanny Adams, the frequent double a woman and comically humorous songs provided perfect entertainment for the drinking/drinking audience. *Red* seems the Pointe and Hasty team are not content to cater to one type of audience; their songs have embraced many styles and periods, making them the most versatile and prolific musical comedy writers in the country.

William Orr, in his capacity as producer/director, has made a notable



Left: Irving Hayes as *Angus*. Above: Edwin Rids and Rosemary Butler as *The Blacks* and *Dancers*

contribution by commissioning, and sometimes adapting, musicals based on established properties. Eleanor Wescott and John McElduff's *Missus Mancy*, based on *The Moon with Ten and Pence* from four other Melbourn comedies, was commissioned as a vehicle for Gordon Chesser and Sheila Bradley. The musical, by Don Mendousa, was intended for the talents of Johnny Lockwood and Jill Perryman, and the songs by Tommy Griffin and Alice Kelson were once again in the modern idiom. I doubt that Bill Orr possessed either of these shows with dreams of a ten year success. Both shows were created specifically for the intimate Phillip St Theatre, and besides, "vehicles" are not designed for longevity. They are designed for bursts of success. However, at least Mr Orr has demonstrated that a show need not be particularly Australian to be an Australian musical.

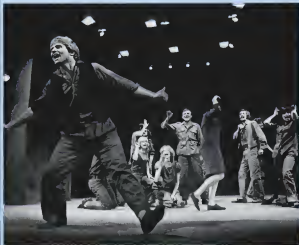
The Newrod Theatre, since its inception, has enjoyed great success with musical plays, particularly Ron Blair's *Flash An*

Yan (1971) with music by Terry Clarke and Charles Coleman (both the score based on traditional ones), and *Wonder Day* by Buddy, Blair/Turner, Bond & O'Donoghue. The *Wonder* show is little more than a string of silly, kindergarten-type and pretty much with fatal lyrics, held together by a terrific plot, but it is produced frequently and most successfully throughout the country. *Flash An*, on the other hand, is quite serious stuff, with a host of wonderfully witty characters to relieve the difficult plot, and some huge high-spirits to boot.

Of course there have been other Australian musicals of some Kenneth Cook's *Seaside*, Roy Livermore's *Jazzier*, the rest of the Adams-Thompson-Brown collection — including *Girl From the Swamp* and *Marriage Are Made In Heaven* — John Howson's *Superman* — a plethora of rock operas, with all the ill-fated *Nuclear, Bess and Miss of Somewere* — but I said there are all of them. And what of the unproduced shows waiting in the wings? Livermore's *Red Riffs*, David Mitchell's musical biography of Lily Langtry and Ben

Miles, Tim Gauding's *Rack-Glo?* Maybe one of these will travel overseas and become another *Chorus Line*. When performers such as John O'May, John Goddard, Loretta Mann and Ron Chaffin are forced to write their own shows simply because nobody else will, that could mean we will lose those people to the more creative climate of England and the U.S. And if the Australian musical theatre has produced anything of importance, our performers must hand the bat

on. So why should they be out here reproducing Broadway musicals when they can be in New York doing the real thing? The least we can do is try to keep them here with more home grown material. Whether the Music Theatre Forum earlier this year was just a bunch of people nodding sleepily and secretly being thrilled just to be in the same room as Stephen Sondheim, or whether it was a valid and educational conclusion that will produce tangible results remains to be seen. The musical theatre in Australia must not be dismissed as hopeless, or to come this far — it would be nice to think we've learned something from our mistakes.



Ron Shorier and company in *Luxxur* (1971), Old Tone Theatre Company

DARLING DOWNS INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION TOOWOOMBA — QUEENSLAND

The Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education is situated in Toowoomba, a city of 57,000 people set on the eastern edge of the Great Dividing Range at an elevation of 660 metres. It has junior, primary, secondary and tertiary education facilities, extensive shopping and commercial areas and is within a few hours driving time of Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and various mountain resorts.

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The Department of Performing Arts at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education offers an exciting three year (full time) programme leading to the award of Diploma of Arts (Creative) both for the Performing and Visual Arts Departments of the Institute aim to give students a basic understanding of all the major art areas. Students also devote a major part of their study to general electives from the School of Arts or other schools in the Institute. The Performing Arts course provides in-depth study in several areas of theatre skills and theoretical studies in both the expressive and technical aspects. The department allows students to concentrate upon either the Theatre Arts or Music. The Theatre Arts course includes acting, theatre design, stage management, technical theatre, directing and children's theatre. The Department is a well equipped with the 270-seat arts theatre.

STAFF 1979 (THEATRE)

Applications are invited from experienced theatre professionals or teachers in the following performing arts areas:

SENIOR LECTURER/LECTURER — TECHNIQUES OF ACTING

(Ref No 90/03)

This appointment will be made to cover all classes in acting and movement from first to third year and applicants should have extensive experience in the professional or semi-professional theatre in addition to the appropriate teaching qualifications. The experience will also be required to make a substantial contribution to the public performing activities of the Department and will be encouraged to accept invitations to work in the Darling Downs region and other places as opportunities arise.

LECTURER — THEATRE DESIGN

(Ref No 90/04)

This appointment will be made to cover the teaching areas of stage and costume design, props making, model making and poster layout for theatrical students from first to third year. The applicant will also be expected to contribute to the public performing activities of the Department and will be encouraged to accept visits in the Darling Downs region and other places as opportunities arise. Some experience in television design would be an advantage.

INSTRUCTOR — STAGE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

(Ref No 90/05)

The applicant will assist in the training of all stage management and technical students within the Department and will finally be responsible for the technical staging of all departmental productions. The applicant will also accompany Departmental touring groups where necessary and will be responsible for supervising students in all areas concerned with stage management.

INSTRUCTOR — VOICE AND SPEECH IN THE THEATRE/RADIO

(Ref No 90/06)

The Department proposes to develop in the area of media and the subsequent use of performing arts students in the areas of radio, television and cinema. The applicant will primarily be responsible for instruction in voice in the theatre, however, some experience in radio or television would be an advantage.

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Senior Lecturer I	\$21,120-\$23,808 pa
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Instructor Div I	\$11,370-\$13,656 pa
Instructor Div II	\$10,260-\$11,312 pa

Applications, including the names of two professional referees, should be submitted by 30th October 1979 to:

The Personnel Officer,
Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education,
Post Office Darling Heights,
TOOWOOMBA, QLD 4360 (2073)

The First National Young Playwrights' Weekend

Too often the experience and creative ability of young people is minimised or ignored. Unlike young musicians, young writers have few outlets for encouragement or training. This is especially true in the field of dramatic writing where subsidised theatres, the film industry and television give no priority at all to development of young writing talent. The Shopfront Theatre For Young People, in Carlton, Sydney, has recognised the need and taken a lead by holding the first National Young Playwrights' Weekend. One consistent during the Weekend was, "This is more significant than the National Playwrights' Conference, because there are the writers of ten years from now. There are over 30 writers being nurtured right here — for a fraction of the cost of the adult conference."

In fact, 35 young writers applied with scripts and all were accepted. The Shopfront Theatre believes that creative activity should not be competitive or elitist. This attitude is fostered in all the work done at the Theatre — no mediocres are held, plays grow from the experience and abilities of those young people who come along. The work of the Theatre is consistently praised for its innovation and strength just as the place celebrated for the Young Playwrights' Weekend was found to be of very high standards despite the rejection of any selection procedures. The young writers, aged between 10 and 20, came from all over Australia and stayed in the large house that is part of The Shopfront Theatre complex.

A large variety of sessions run by professional writers, actors and directors filled all the spaces of the Theatre. The sewing room housed a radio scriptwriting workshop, the members of Merona Action Theatre talked about group-orientation and non-verbal writing in the design studio, a director and actors held a production workshop at the theatre. Peter Brown chose to sit out in the tent with his group. Seven Squires yelled and screamed with his young group in the common room in front of the fire. The dining room was wired for sound to record the sessions held there. Jill Warren was making a video tape of a puppet play on the lawn, the street theatre group performed a play about rebellion at the Carlton railway

station. I've known a lot of teenagers, not all of them good, but on the National Young Playwrights' Weekend I have been happily astonished to hear of the talent being encouraged in young people at The Shopfront Theatre For Young People.

Invited to attend in Resident Playwright, I was flattered but cynical upon learning that I was to read and discuss plays written by ten-year old children and teenagers. My pleasant surprise was on the way, my cynicism on the way out.

I read a play by a seventeen-year old girl — her first attempt — that was every bit as good as, if not superior to, some plays I have seen performed in major theatres. I read a play by a ten-year old boy that had the plot-line rolling about in his head, only four pages of it, but in those pages showing such imaginative talent as to control me. I had it read wrong on a reading.

One of the best and most surprising workshops I have ever known, that is the only way to describe the last five days. And it is wonderful to know that I have been able to meet and advise some of Australia's best coming playwrights.

I am that is what these kids are. And I sincerely hope that the dedication of Errol Bray, Garry Fry and Catherine Dalton and the children themselves, will not go unacknowledged or unmentioned in the future.

Long live The Shopfront Theatre for Young People!

pleased and tried to get away perhaps to the East End crowd, Jan McNeil spent half a night on the office typewriter reworking a script with a 17 year old writer.

The Weekend was three and a half days of intensive learning for the young writers. For many of them it was the first time their writing had been treated with respect and admiration — and the boost to their self-confidence was enhanced by the fact that the praise was coming from some of Australia's top professional theatre people. The gathering was strongly structured with each session being followed by a break where discussion could be continued in for mally or other writers could be sought out in this way even the most timid became important learning sessions. Each young writer was placed in groups suited to their

dramatic leanings and also in sessions that broadened their writing experience. Most of the groups were small but occasional large, eleven sessions were held. Practical work was done also — the street theatre, the puppet play Margaret Kelly took a group to see some filming after they had read the script, Max Galois organised a rehearsal reading of a short play, Matthew O'Sullivan and Malcolm Keith led an improvisation around being of the plays, the radio groups worked with Brian Houston on prepared tapes with the Theatre's sound equipment. Tape recorders and video cameras were available all through the Weekend.

Theatre performances also played an important part in the Weekend. On the first night The Shopfront Theatre gave an open rehearsal of *The Madhouse* — a play written by David Thornton, one of the young writers attending. Everyone went to attend Theatre to see Gong House by Alana de Green and discussed the play with Richard Whelan afterwards. Canberra Children's Theatre performed their group-created play *Face To Face*. In a group led by Errol Bray, 16 of the young writers built and performed a short play. On the last night some of the young writers performed *The Madhouse* by Helen Baggis, a 14 year old writer in the Weekend. A video tape of Margaret Kelly's television play, *Figure a Poet*, was played over and over by the TV allocation. Other performances have already been mentioned — so far, the idea of performance was a central theme for the Weekend. The professionals showed that dramatic writing had to be performable first and foremost and the young writers kept asking where they could get their work performed or even workshopped. Unfortunately, the recommendations from the Old Toke Theatre, Narrand School, the Australian Film and Television School, the Literature Board and the professional writers themselves could offer little hope for special attention being given to young writers' work in the various subsidised theatres in Sydney. The best chance seemed to be with a few youth theatre groups in Melbourne and Sydney who could not offer professional actors for the job. This session which was called "Where to now?" ended the Weekend on a

slightly depressing, one for a because clear just how little was being done in Australia to help young drama writers.

One of the most gratifying aspects of the Weekend was that the professional writers without exception treated the young writers with respect and sensitivity and many felt that they themselves had experienced an important event in their own development. Alan McNeil lived in with the young writers as resident professional and was a tower of encouragement and inspiration. He was constantly reading scripts, editing, advising. Although each professional had been given a couple of scripts to read most insisted on reading every play they could get hold of. Plays circulated amongst the young writers too and this created a very special atmosphere of closeness and understanding for everyone had a previous prior of work under scrutiny. The other writers who attended as "tutors" were Margaret Kelly, Peter Kenna, Steve Speers, Alan Buro, Shona Hansen, Jill Morris, Marvyn Lewis, Richard Bradshaw, Harold Lewis, John Sammons, and members of Brisbane Actors Theatre. The directors and actors were: Matthew O'Sullivan, Max Gallen, John Dawson, Malcolm Keith, James Elliott and Chris Hayward.

It was exciting to find close relationships forming between the senior writers and their young counterparts. Jan McNeil claims he has found a girl who "writes McNeil as well as McNeil". Peter Kenna has asked the Theatre to pass on to him scripts by two young writers whose work he particularly liked. Matthew O'Sullivan has offered to do production notes on some scripts by a young Queensland writer. Margaret Kelly was there for the whole three days and is now seeking out production possibilities for a few scripts. The enthusiasm of both Steve Speers and Jill Morris made them particularly popular with the younger kids and Alan Buro must have been doing lots right — he could only take one session but it lasted a minimum two and a half hours. In fact, at the risk of seeming sentimental, the gathering was generally agreed to be the warmest and friendliest group of its kind anyone there had experienced. The readiness of the professionals to accept and respect the kids

MARGARET KELLY: When I was first asked to volunteer to talk about tolerance writing at a Young Playwrights Weekend I did so with a feeling of sobriety. I was giving up my time to talk to a bunch of kids. Now, at the end of the Weekend my feelings have changed drastically. I have learnt so much this weekend about my own writing! I have also learnt that there's a whole crop of young writers around who in a few years will probably be taking my job. My only complaint about the weekend is that it didn't last long enough. Next time make it longer. And until all more talent is saved from oblivion.

allowed an atmosphere of strong affection and co-operation to develop.

On the practical side — the Literature Board of the Australian Council gave The Shopfront Theatre a grant of \$4,955 to run the Weekend. This was to cover professional fees, food, loans for young writers where needed, administration costs and etc. Many of the professionals were able to offer their services free. The only charge to the young writers was a contribution of \$5 towards food. The air fares of the South Australian were paid by their Education Department.

Apart from the continuing contact some of the senior writers have arranged with includes a number of other follow-up ideas some out of the Weekend. The Shopfront Theatre plans to produce two of the plays, by Sydney writers so that they can be involved in the production process. The whole Sydney contingent has agreed to meet once a month for discussions, and some will be coming to the Theatre on a weekly basis. The Theatre has offered to act as a clearing house for future scripts and some of the professionals will help find outlets for the plays. The Theatre is also planning to publish a collection of the plays from the Weekend in magazine format and this will be promoted through youth theatres and schools. The Theatre's magazine, *Revue*, regularly publishes short plays by kids and is another outlet for writers. Video tapes and sound tapes of scripts held at the Weekend will soon be available for interested groups to purchase at cost price. Naturally we hope that the success of this Weekend will make

it an annual event and the Theatre intends to seek funds for a 1978 Weekend.

Perhaps the full impact of this gathering will not be felt for some years, but its immediate value to the young writers themselves was unmistakable. All young people need encouragement and respect for their creative endeavours, and the National Young Playwrights' Weekend certainly gave this. It was a great success, and hopefully a great beginning.

ANTHONY FUNNELL, 12, Brisbane: I think the weekend was vital to my writing career, because we discussed our plays with professional writers. But I think it is a big shame that there are not more of these sort of groups.

JULIANNE WAITTS, 17, Adelaide: The National Young Playwrights' Weekend has succeeded in giving a pep previously ignored by the majority of adults. For once young writers are taken seriously and given honest criticism. To work with the people we have worked with at reading, blowing. The stimulation and enthusiasm is outstanding. No one turns from you when you present a script. All the professional writers have been eager to read and discuss any written work. This was all the young writers here can be shown leads in their writing and how to avoid traps in the future. It's about time young Australian writers were given a chance. We have been recognized and it'll be our names you'll be reading on the credits in the future.

JOHN TURNBULL, 17, Sydney: The Young Playwrights' Weekend made me aware of the difficulties confronting young Australian playwrights in getting their plays produced and more acknowledged by the theatres around Australia. Apart from the general encouragement, each young playwright was given the opportunity to work with professionals in their particular field of success. Also we were given the chance to work with professionals in other media related to theatre.

My only real complaint was the lack of facilities, but the weekend showed the need for such groups as The Shopfront Theatre.

SWEENEY AGONISTES

David Marr

Stories about Sweeney put him at the centre of a running vaudeville: Sweeney's days at the races, Sweeney's parties, Sweeney the Coca Cola bottler of the North downing his Dom Perignon, Sweeney the only

man close to up the headmaster at Cheltenham as he's thrown out, Sweeney the friend and co-gaoler of Kitten, Sweeney the post pursuing the doom-lacked Anna Seton. A big drinker must (like wine) be monopoly player.

Who bought up Broadwalk with a tin or a tree

To see the pulled ball boy smile, or please

The man who supplied non-alloys

Pillows Under my father.

His mouth a liturgy

Of prose. Like a gangster, his wallet a

leitmotif

Sweeney who brought up himself gone

Was his amongst mother at once, gone

Was he teased up father at 17

But reflective Sweeney at 45 long as

Lord Lord How you leave off How you

end up men

Leave them walking on the gamely

pavements,

Sucking on the tamed-up, used-up ear

Penning down and what death reveals

Sweeney from one to live with a cartoon

In his button hole introducing the rider

To the caddy, Sweeney who flies through

the backshop.

He's got a fine hand with those grey

hair down back from a big forehead, and

a face that bulges and charms in an elusive

alternation. It's somehow a Queensland

face — a bit like Jack Egerton's, with

something of Belle Petersen in it, tough

but unyielded

His arrival for the interview at a three

piece set of fine headmaster's cheek, a



unpulsed and blood-red expression. He was determined to organise a bit of calm around himself but attempts to get away from the ruckusville Sydney were doomed. Within minutes of ordering drinks an old hand on the press was across his bar. "How to thank your kind friend?"

"A creditbacking man," read the newspaper to me with effort at severity and emphasis. "The king of bloody Brinkage."

Brian Swenney and theatre administrators came together with Twelfth Night Theatre in Brisbane. He was one of the associates of businessman John Whalley got together to back the new project in 1965. He joined its board, raised money, and took a lot of his own money into it — money principally from the Kurja Canteen fortune of the Swenney family.

"I'm just a high class soft drink salesman," he says. And his business has included the Kurja brand, and Coca Cola whose franchise he has to bottle and sell between Ruckusland and Limestone. It isn't the whole of the North, but it's enough.

At the Melbourne Cup in 1954 Whalley asked Swenney if he'd care to join the Australian Council and Swenney — who says he's never been a member of a political party, and votes how it suits him — took his place on the Council in July 1955. In July this year Fraser appointed him Chairman of the Theatre Board to succeed John Murray.

Swenney doesn't carry any of Murray's beliefs that theatre must necessarily aim for some sort of commercial viability. "Lament," he said rather gravely, "are substitutes when you're there."

"I'm committed to excellence, of course I am. I'm a hierarchical sort of person. I believe some people have more talent than others, and leading talent is like finding oil — leading a new creature."

"But I'm committed to excellence. We must have a standard and we must be sensitive to the needs of small companies. I suppose that's only reached with more money. But we depend on the big professional companies. To a man, actors want to get to the Old Tote, the Murrumbidgee, the MTC."

Swenney may not be very powerful. His appointment as for two years (after that the usual four, he doesn't know a half of a lot in detail about theatre in Australia, and he and Joan Batterbury were once chased but observers report the Australian Council's headquarters in North Sydney say that some confidence has set in between them lately.

That's the essence of the normal order of things: the first appointment he gives is often of a person whose coming on is a big thing. It's a reaction many reverses on closer acquaintance. Swenney inspires loyalty in some, but is not without enemies. "I don't know how much, I've got, but it must be plenty. If you haven't got enemies you don't deserve friends."

Joan Kilian is one friend, an associate at many Swenney parties at the old Queensland house on stamps they live out in Hamilton. There's lots of Mr Murrumbidgee going on among the guests when Kilian

says. Asked about other political friends there's a sudden gaspiness. "I know a lot of politicians, they're pretty interesting fellows too."

Swenney has a reputation for being able to get money out of private business to back the arts. In the present arts political atmosphere it's the best claim a contender for this sort of office can make. He began with the Twelfth Night Theatre appeal (\$300,000) and says he's still at it, but won't name names of companies that he's recently gauged money out of. "I've been managing to get a few bucks from here and there. I've had some success and I'm working on a few."

His only qualification for the job Swenney claims for himself is to be "a consumer" of theatre. Cyril Richard in *Alphie Spirit* was one of the great theatre experiences for him. Others as he then lists are the first production of *Virginia Woolf* at New York with Liza Hagan as Marita, Narciso Haysa ("fat hot butt") playing Cabaret in Perth, Alan Edwards in *Redburn FM* and a night of "unreliable truth" between an Irish audience and Irish men when he took his family to the Abbey to see *The Plough and the Stars*.

"I'm not prepared to tell the board what to do," said Swenney going over his plans. "But it would be a good thing for the Australian public if there was more touring — the MTC in Brisbane say, and the Tate in Adelaide and Perth. I'd like to see the companies come along to the Theatre Board with positive requests for funds for touring to capital cities."

He doesn't know if old members of theatre companies working through the Council to keep uncertain heads out of town, are true or not. If true, he says, they wouldn't be. There's no need for it, they aren't going to run each other's sideshows. There's no reason, he argues, that a good production in Melbourne shouldn't be taken in Adelaide and Sydney. And if the Elizabeth Trust has been looking after those tours in the past, that that's only a formal difficulty to his plans.

"Negotiations between the Council and the Trust are proceeding."

Swenney casts himself as a nationalist and apolitical Australian playwrighting he finds has a documentary dryness about it as the movies, but he admires Peter Kyriakos ("that's a good play of his, *Ward God*") and David Williamson. "Williamson is the one with the big chance — and obviously I'm talking about him as a world playwright, obviously we can't talk in the narrow sense. He's got to succeed in the English speaking world, in the world."

Swenney is also a thespian, a not very clever, a recorder and (for private distribution only) poet. "I didn't make it as a creative person, and that's destroying. I tried a few many years ago, but I didn't make it. There are more aspiring poets in this country than rats home."

He's the sort who reads three or four books at a time, "always reading Chardin" and when we spoke was also taking in Margaret Maude ("Japan"), Philip Larkin and Langford's *Form of the Sword*. He

differs Shaw and is devoted to T.S. Eliot.

Eliot, he says, is the only poet the Australians have produced. He's up there in Swenney's gallery with Goethe and Mozart. And talking of Eliot reminds Swenney of an anecdote about a musician of his, a professor at Harvard, who was visiting London and asked Eliot what theatre he should see while he was there. Should he see *Look Back in Anger*? "My company published that," replied Eliot sharply. "But not with my agreement. If I were you I'd go and see a play by a little known Australian playwright called *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*." Swenney wonders, in an aside to the reader, if he ever passed the endorsement on to Lewis.

Olden, for this collector of people, he's not just Lewis. It won't be long, he said, not to forget a name or two, like tell people years later the place and date they first met. And it's at the track he makes great discoveries: very "warm people" the racing crowd.

There's a sudden shortness of purpose in his voice as he talks about the track. "The trouble in the people in the area don't get mixed up with the gamblers, and vice versa. The track is banking for an audience. We're down from three percent to one percent, and I'd say even the theatre is bigger than one percent. Mind you, we're much more sure of our audience because people keep on betting. But they're able mixing and theatre gamblers don't work. People come to see the great event, to see great horses and great wars."

In Sydney Tommy Smith is training a parking lot bus, a horse that "couldn't be better bred" by Queensland out of the Fines. He's called in March to Gilly.

He's said that if Swenney learn about someone who appeals to him he'll not say so. And then he read Anne Sexton's work and made it his business to find her. She became more than an addition to his collection of magazines, however, he says, "something different" before her suicide last year.

"She was a good girl of course. She was a honest, the honesty of the woman and the tragedy. She was right to the bone, writing things before anyone was saying them. And she had a great decision in God. She said, 'The flesh does not lie, but I say, 'There are no answers in the flesh.'"

Swenney is a man who speaks his mind, not so much wearing his heart on his sleeve as his hands all over his argument. He's anxious not to be thought a fool, not to be found superficial, but this lofty freedom of talk is going to expose the man to some badly ridiculed around the Australian Council. He has enthusiasm, he reveals himself, he doesn't fit the category. That's not what they take at the Council.

He has an old saying that is good to "let the hand out for a fly". A couple of years with the Theatre Board should give him every chance for that. But if things don't go so well there's another Swenney saying for the Chairman to fall back on. "I don't give a fuck what people think of me."

Part One

The Hunter Valley Theatre Company



How and Why

Tony Trench

The history of the formation of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company can be told fairly

simply — but a straight recounting of the facts gives little indication of the problems encountered, any one of which could have resulted in the project being still born.

The idea was the brain-child of two staff members of the Arts Council of Australia (NSW Division) — John Tasker, then the Council's Artistic Advisor, and myself, the Administrator. The Executive Committee approved our plans to investigate the formation of a professional regional theatre company somewhere in NSW, and the rest was up to us. We looked at two areas — Orange, in the Central West, where a Civic Theatre was being built, and Newcastle in the Hunter Valley, the State's second largest city. The deciding factor in favour of Newcastle was the involvement in the project, early in 1974, of Mr Bernard Harcourt, then the Chairman of the Joint Coal Board.

During the ensuing two years we proceeded on a very stop/start fashion towards our goal, making frequent trips between Sydney and Newcastle, talking to interested people, and generally trying to involve as many members of the community as possible. The two major hurdles which we had to overcome were the lack of a suitable theatre in Newcastle, and the

lack of funds (what use a theatre company which has enough money).

In 1975 Anthony King, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Adult Education at Sydney University, was seconded to the project, and he was able to spend a great deal more time in Newcastle than we were. Very soon he had successfully negotiated with the University for the use of their Arts/Drama Theatre, and with the Arts Office of the Department of Education for a devoted High School building as office, rehearsal and working space, both rent-free. And with financial backing from the Coal Board and other local interests, and the appointment of Terence Clarke as Artistic Director, the company opened its doors to the public in March 1976 with John Howard's *The Fleeting World*.

All fairly straightforward, so where were the problems?

Firstly, the matter of finding a permanent home for the company was not resolved by Tony King's negotiations with the university — it represented a stop-gap arrangement, which led to problems forcing the company ultimately to quit the theatre at the end of the first season. The university required the use of the building for lectures during the day, frequently resulting



in the company being unable to gain assistance for dress rehearsals and set-ups. The decision to use the theatre was a compromise because we realised from the outset that the location of the campus on the outskirts of Newcastle would be a deterrent to people without private transport. In addition, we considered that there would be a resistance among many people to going to a campus theatre. However, in view of the delays this had recovered up to that time, we considered that it would be better to accept the university's offer, rather than let the whole project run on its own.

During our search for a suitable venue one thing became very apparent — gritty, polluted, industrialised Newcastle has some beautiful old buildings. And with the converted stables at the old Newcastle Hotel we had high hopes that at least one of these old buildings would be available, and suitable. But this was not the case. One building which did come up for consideration led to the only major difference of opinion between the Arts Council and Joint Coal Board members on the steering committee. The Hunter Theatre had, for many years, been the only venue in Newcastle for touring commercial shows. A wild, 800-seat barn, it was never much loved by Newcastleans, and in fact as the Civic Theatre was equipped by the City Council for live presentations the Hunter led just virtual death, apart from occasional film screenings. It was offered for sale and the Coal Board representatives, their eyes lighting on a "Frayed Theatre", were keen to buy. We vigorously opposed such a move, having reason of the company being mired with a perpetual loss in a run-down suburb. The result was that the Coal Board did not buy the building, but the episode produced a rift between the two components of the committee which led to the company meeting out on a wilderness as the city centre which would have been ideal for conversion. It is ironic that the company leased the Hunter Theatre for its 1977 season, and encountered all the problems we had forecast. Now, in mid-1977, the problem of a permanent performance space still exists.

Finding was another problem in the formation period. Lulled into a sense of security by the Chairman's reassurances that business interests in Newcastle would come good with funds once our urban establishment problems were solved, we found in late 1975 that the economic climate had changed dramatically from early 1974. No longer were large commercial interests prepared to make significant contributions to the NTCB. NBN Channel 5, the commercial radio station and the local newspapers were prepared to give assistance in kind, and happily both State and Federal government agencies made special allocations to the company early in its existence. But the Newcastle City Council, which could reasonably have been expected to help in some way, gave neither financial assistance, nor help with a building, in spite of being the largest landholder in Newcastle.

The other organisations which could have been expected to give assistance — morally if not financially — was the project's instigator, the Arts Council of NSW. Although initial approval was given for John Fisher and I to carry out our investigations, there was a singular lack of enthusiasm from many members, while others were actively opposed to it. This was particularly depressing in view of the fact that the Arts Council had conferred with the Sydney Opera House Trust to produce a report *Developing the Performing Arts in NSW* which advocated that the State could support its own theatre companies in areas outside Sydney. In addition it was suggested that the Hunter Valley Theatre Company (as named because it was designed to serve the whole region, not Newcastle alone) would take over a part of the Arts Council's role in that area. But the company has not occurred outside Newcastle since its first production, except in schools and clubs.



Frayed Shoestring

Terence Clarke,
Artistic Director

SHOESTRING NEWCASTLE is the telephone address of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company which is, at the time of writing, in recess until 14 August. By the time this article appears its future should be clearer, and I hope we shall be in production again.

Our troubles spring from inadequate funding and lack of a suitable theatre or performance space, none would add a third cause, the wrong artistic policy, others a fourth, the wrong attitudes for a regional professional theatre company (Q Theatre in the Western Suburbs of Sydney is successfully running as a co-operative).

It is impossible in 1977 to run a regional professional theatre company on a shoestring. That is a fact that must be faced by anyone trying to start one up, and by the major funding bodies whose policies include — in the words of the Australia Council's Theatre Board drama policy — "The progressive development of regionally based drama companies". If this is to be more than a well-meaning gesture to



regional theatre it will have to be backed by substantial funding. For, realistically, theatre outside capital cities costs more. There are no patronages for actors in the regions, so far commercial boys, movie stars, TV and radio work — which is often subsidised low rewards, and enable actors, in turn, to subsidise companies in their first difficult years. The smaller regional populations mean fewer potential theatre-goers and hence less money from box office sales, particularly in the initial years. Local residents, unlike their English and European counterparts, do not yet accept a responsibility for the performing arts. Though Q Theatre has made some headway with their local residents, and we have a lot on the door, they must eventually accept this along with their responsibility for literature, art galleries, sports, parks, and so on, if only for the reason that of the \$250 000 turnover (including federal and state grants), 95% or more remains in the region, generates jobs, and helps stimulate local business. Converting the councils of this will be a slow process, however.

We are grateful for grants from the Australia Council (1977: \$22 000) and the NSW Division of Cultural Activities (\$26 000) which were promised for a company in its second year. Unfortunately, our budgeting for the year was very tight and made no allowance for a loss, it also assumed a rent-free performance space is one which we will have not found. Last year we were 50 km out of town on the university campus, without the university's generous support we could never have started. We were faced in January with the choice of leaving the Hunter Theatre, which costs about \$600, or delaying a start until suitable premises were found. We decided to take a risk with the Hunter in order to keep faith with our 1200 members (annual fee \$15) and to fulfil the terms of our grants.

It was a wildly unsuccessful move, bringing greatly increased costs in all areas of production and front of house, and to our dismay our first play, *When The Butler Saw*, drew less than last year's average audience. Our second show, a double bill of *The Last Daffy Show* and *The Rep. Murphy Show* under the title *Sporting Doubt*, toured local clubs on Newcastle and Maitland and turned local football,

entertainment and singer John Caeson. Despite an excellent production by guest director John Barker (credited as "The good night in the theatre as you would find anywhere" and "Best blood in The District"), the best publicity we had had and what seemed to me the happy conjunction of Newcastle's three main preoccupations — sport, TV, and the clubs — in did disastrous business, playing to fewer than 750 people over four weeks. We struck trouble with the threat of a legal action from a member of the Barry family, and there is no doubt that that did us a lot of harm. Together our first two productions lost \$22,000 by the time we came to finish the writing was on the wall, for it could only have made a profit with an audience of 7000 or more. And so we had to lay off all the Company after *Aladdin* closed, leaving only me and my secretary.

None of the former employees decided to stay in Newcastle and produce theatre themselves; they had to go on the dole for four weeks while rehearsing, and it is good to report that the season of three performances was virtually booked out before opening. Three action visits from that considerable cash on both the idea of regional theatre and the region itself, and has gone some way to counteracting a widespread feeling that INTC has been imposed on the region by a Sydney entrepreneur (the Arts Council, which regretfully went bankrupt soon after we started) Sydney money, a Sydney artistic director, and Sydney actors. — Although we have provided twenty-four rates for local actors as low as fifteen cents.

Our present crisis is the second in less than a year. In the gloom that has threatened the company recently there has been much talk of failure. But the attendance figures for our first year suggest a marked success, if we compare our achievements with that of other companies. When the Old Tote opened in 1960 it was the first professional theatre company in NSW, presenting four plays to an average audience of just over 6000, the average audience for our six-manuscript productions last year was 3200 — more than half that of the Tote's in a city one tenth the size of Sydney. Their third production was *Macbeth*, which we have just presented; they played to about 6000, we to almost 5000. These figures do not show us in disadvantage yet, but to read that at this stage the Tote did not have to find money for director, designer, stage-management, front-of-house, on construction, administration, office overheads, or rent — all of which were provided by staff and students of NIDA, or by the UWSW. We have had to pay all of these and, by a determination of the board, at least award wages to full-time employees (but no overtime, indignantly hard worked employees will subscribe to). The comparison with Newrad's first year is even more surprising. They played seven shows to a total of about 17,000! We in to over 14,000! In their average was about 2,300 to our 1,200! It is hard to use the word failure of

such abundance.

On the ten manuscript plays we have presented, we have been Australians, including the world premiere of *A Woppe* and *Wop*, devised by local writer John O'Donoghue (to be published in *Theatre Australia*). One of the jobs of a regional company is to reflect the life of the region, and O'Donoghue's play did this superbly. It was our most successful straight play last year. We were to have presented in June the premiere of Donoghue's most recent play, *The Devil's Cove*, but our record has stopped that. We hope to produce a better-looking.

We do not only present manuscript productions but have a community program which covers landscape theatre, artwork work, workshops for local groups, far process, for the university, for the College of Advanced Education, and for young people: we are a regional drama resource centre, using classes, professional assistance to local groups, an in-school playmaking service, and so on. I have no doubt that this less published work is our most important contribution and makes a claim. Last year Community Director Michael Confield devised, directed, scripted music for, and performed in *Amorismus* and *Academus*. *Amorismus*, two anthologies of poetry and music which played to more than 6,000 pupils and were extraordinarily well received where they went.

It is not easy to find actors who are prepared to go out of circulation for six or nine months, and perform unseen by most producers, directors, and casting agents. We have been lucky indeed to have people of the calibre of Robert Alexander, Tony Nicholson and Kerry Walker (who all spent 1976 in Newcastle) and, this year, Alan Butler and Pat Bishop. Pat came to us as guest actor for one show, but stayed on, and will have been with us for over six months by the time this issue. There is still abroad a Newcastle something of the cultural cringe that marked all Australia less at twenty years ago — "if you were any good you wouldn't be here", the presence of such an excellent and well-known actor as Pat, and her commitment to the company (both Pat and Alan have played on for the theatre restaurant show) have helped to reduce that feeling.

As I write I do not know what we shall mean, or indeed if we shall. It has been suggested that we have grown too quickly, we had sixteen employees for most of this year and with the double load of manuscript and community work, sixteen never felt like too many — on the contrary, the very long hours most have had to work is very worrying. It seems likely that as our permitted administrative will go on as shortly, we should have had one from the outset, but administrators do not fit back on the ground. Without a healthy injection of money both to clear out debts (about \$16,000, plus more to pay on loans contracts if we can't and to enable us to go another production underway, our future is uncertain. Newrad's benefit of *Black Ads* on 24 July, Newcastle Regency's of

The Lord Dunsen on 16 July, and others promised but not yet definite, are encouraging gestures, the practical support and loans to flapping morale are most warmly appreciated, coming as they do from groups who could well use the money themselves. Without more money, without a big brother to lean on, it is likely that we will stagger from crisis to crisis without protest, it is doubtful if we can do anything. The City Council has approved our use of low rental of part of the old city hall, but five actresses may stop that. Somewhere there must be a rough space for rough theatre, a warehouse or factory near the centre of town somewhere awaiting conversion to a playing area for about 200 people. Although INTC is not yet Newcastle sufficient, Newcastleans want us to stay to justify our existence: there has been almost daily our respondents in the excellent Newcastle Evening Herald; the media generally are on side with particular support from the local ABC, and from Channel 5. Last committees of members are working hard on fund-raising, promotion, memberships, and activities, members have been delivering mail to set costs and helping out in the office: there is a realisation to let the actors go or to win as they. I think we will just make it, but it won't be easy.

The Riverina Trucking Company



Terry O'Connell, Artistic Director

The Riverina Trucking Company opened in August 1976 with Ron Blair and Michael Brady's *Macbeth* on fire. The production was staged with a budget of \$200 raised from within the company.

Owing to the success of the production it was decided to stage a season of Robert Patrick's *Archer's Children*. Despite dire production problems were turned away from full houses at each performance.

Immediately following *Archer's Children* the company presented *Swansea* an outdoor entertainment for children which was presented free of charge throughout the summer. This production,

designed by the company and directed by Gordon Reelley was presented in Wagga's parks and gardens and also toured south coast beach resorts.

Early in 1977 it was decided a permanent home was needed for the Trucking Company. Revenue College of Advanced Education kindly loaned to the company a timber rental on abandoned arts students' workshop on their south campus. This area was, in the early months of 1977, converted into the intimate theatre where the company now presents its seasons. The \$1000 needed for the conversion was raised by public appeal.

The theatre opened with the Australian premiere of Jim Watts and Maud Simpson's musical *Diamond Studs*. The production played to 100% capacity coinciding with an 11.30 pm Sunday performance, at which 120 patrons attended (the theatre seats 108).

Diamond Studs was followed by a season of David Williamson's *The Repossessed* and late night performances of the company-directed *The People Show*.

For the remainder of 1977 the company will present seasons of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, company-directed local history musical *Rachman* in the Revenue and by arrangement with Imperial Yachts Ltd., London's Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The company will also present group-derived late night entertainment and special activities. The company's artistic director is Terry O'Connell (country Australia Council) and the company is designed in Fred Lyle (country N.S.W. District Cultural Activities).



Fine reviews are now being made to free the company into a small professional regional theatre company, opening as such in early 1978. The company's policy will be to bring the theatre experience to the widest number of Revenue students possible. It will continue to present seasons in its own theatre as well as touring the Revenue regularly and presenting special community activities. The company will concentrate on presenting original group-derived work, colourful interpretations of classical plays and contemporary Australian work. It is envisaged that apart from the professional artists employed the company will also encourage the involvement and participation of local artists.

This well-entitled larger-than-life play is to be performed and kept the community spirit and image of the Trucking Company alive. Solid financial support is now being granted for the project and it is hoped that government funding bodies will contribute to the relatively small amount needed to achieve this exciting project.

The company already possesses its own theatre, a growing following, a firm policy and its own artistic director and designer. We believe that one place will work because of the total base they now possess, to make the Revenue Trucking Company a unique and exciting professional, regional company.



Mobilising Wagga Marguerite Wells

Having mobilised Wagga, the Revenue Trucking Company seemed to calibrate its. With a production every six weeks, they truck their audience seats from the local private theatre, and then truck them back again. On the last night of their smooth but muscular *Diamond Studs* they trucked away 120 people from their one hundred seat theatre and they have not come just for their next production *Much Ado About Nothing*. 'Country people will stay away from Shakespeare in droves' they are being told, but then they were told that about Kennedy's *Children*, *Harold on Ice* and the *Repossessed* too. Instead of collapsing in a heap, as they might have been expected to do, the Revenue Trucking Company struggle joyfully on, trucking their lights from the school hall to their theatre and back again for each production, and filling their hired seats with eager ticket buyers.

Much Ado is going on with a budget of \$1 000, the profits from *The Repossessed* and *The People Show* Number One. After *Much Ado* comes *Rachman* in the Revenue (an historical musical, which they are dressing themselves, and *Maree*. Then they will move from their old-fashioned truck space in the Revenue C.A.B. to a new season in the central city to sound off the year with a money-making, (and, I have no doubt theatrically successful), extravaganza *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Their director, Terry O'Connell, expects that by the end of the year, their profits will have

paid for lights and other essential equipment that they have improved till now.

A company which expects to make a profit at the box office is something. This one, with two professional staff — Terry O'Connell, the director, and the designer, Fred Lyle — quarrel only with the community demands for its own room. It has had one performance at a handsome State square production bought out six weeks in advance by an association of cultural clubs. It has been invited to do three seasons in League Clubs with the column parades, led by the club managements. They are planning a test theatre for the Wagga Agricultural Show. This is a truly popular theatre, and one with artistic integrity. I have seen a similar self-indulgence in any Trucking Company production. Then *Repossessed* was a sound and workmanlike production, and in my 1977 hierarchy of delightful evenings at the theatre, *Diamond Studs* ranks above *Repossessed* of the National, with *The People Show* Number One fighting for first place with the National's *Black Ads*.

By the end of this year, the Company will have done eleven productions in eight months. Seven of those will be Australian plays (two devised by the company themselves). They submit on only plays that they really want to do, and that means a policy of writing one out of three themselves. While there may be some things that they decide not to try in Wagga just yet, they don't intend to run after cheap success. Terry O'Connell says bluntly that if they staged *Decision-Lured* by English lyrics, they could kill the central city consciousness of your crowd. If that's true, why didn't JCW choose to Wagga? He refuses to allow himself to believe that being based in a country town must limit their repertoire. These wicked words in *George Washington* says: 'No might have meant that some Wagga-ites will never see a Trucking Company production, but then as he points out, look at the Wagga-ites who turn up to every single production, sometimes two nights running.

Plans for the future entail being given a Federal/State grant — which at the moment is under consideration — to use the current public service terms. A staff of eight — director, designer, administrator and five actors, all on the minimum of salary, of course, would make touring possible, and give room for the forecast of 1978 plans to explode — *The Club* (on *Our Selection*, *Rock and Roll*, *Harold*, *Two Boba Fick* in the Australian theatre — gold dust to wanderers), *Run For Your Love* (documentary on Australian athletes, and why people push themselves to their physical limit), and *The Great Australian Radio Serial Show*, with a family who develop with the development of the radio and the comedy they follow.

The Trucking Company tries to make each of its productions a new little adventure for Wagga. Back has been a new adventure for me, and, come to think of it, not such a small adventure either: when a truck is a three hundred mile drive worthwhile.



By no means the best atmosphere in which to appreciate the Troupe

**STAMPEDE
FALL-OUT AND FOLLOW ME**

DAWN BACHELOR

Stamper and Follow-me at the La Bode Theatre, Brisbane. (Q) With: Audrey Atkinson, Jo Cress, Richard Featherington, Jon Hanks, Greg King, John Lane, Errol O'Neil, Paula Scott.

La Bode Theatre has now established a very successful practice of play performances at 5.30 pm on a Sunday followed by a stand-up meal of some kind. The five-to-weekend informality is most congenial, and that time period after 5.30 o'clock can be pleasantly wiled away with a play followed by a gentle chat over some cheap snack before slipping into bed with a book around 10.30.

The Popular Theatre Troupe recently opened a head three-night season at La Bode with such a Sunday performance, tackling on the optional extra of strolling afterwards to some vintage jazz in Canton Street. The way the bulk of the audience lagged over the govtish indicated that both the performance and the offers were well-received.

The occasion was something of a hybrid, however, and by no means the best atmosphere in which to come to a real appreciation of the work of the company. In part it became a sort of PR event — an opportunity for interested special groups to see the Troupe on display, and so there were liberal sprinklings of academics from various institutions and little clusters of people from other theatre groups. This meant that the shows took place in a strange climate of professional detachment mixed with self-conscious complacency. Small wonder that there was evident confusion of intention in the performances. Especially when the rest of the available audience were GP who had paid their \$3.50 for a night of theatre. (The price, by the way, seemed to me a bit excessive for a little over one hour's total playing time. This added elements of the benefit perform since to the evening.)

The first of the two shows on the programme was *Stamper* which used the producers metaphor of a B-grade western movie to look at the struggle between the unions and the establishment. Two outlaw unions (the unions), champions of the underdog, take on the scruffy but outwardly respectable sheriff (big business) and his willing deputies (Maf and the media). The deputies are portrayed by one actor, so that Maf and the media are delightfully presented as two aspects of the same character. For a time the outlaw role from the rich in favour of the down-trodden, all one is sweet-talked into going legal, and co-operates with the law's order system in return for a share of the profits. This leaves one actor at the end of the play riding feverishly off into the sunset to carry on the good fight alone.

Seen, as it were, under glass, in the backstage setting I have described, such an image loses much of the potency it carries in the quadrangle of a CAFE or a union canteen, or in front of spectators from a big multi-national, where it tops cheerily with group propaganda. So we missed the wonderful visceral response these shows get in the context for which they were designed. By way of compensation we were able to cast a cooler critical eye on the style, and see how it reduces the swagging world of politics to the level of cardboard characters and comic book metaphors, revealing the laughable within the pompous.

In this regard, Premier Job is graphically depicted as a pantomime quick who profiles his famous "Cure All Britain" containing the wonder ingredient State of Emergency. Attaching to this simple picture is all the reverberations of the tourist operator coming the glibbie manner with false promises about their welfare, while secretly serving his own interests.

Alas, the simplicity of this type one-on-one of the better features of the style. They are an extension of the metaphorical fabric which is the essence of the approach. Like all metaphors, their power and value lie in

suggestion, not in logic.

The over-all message of *Stamper*, which presents a somewhat sinister at first glance, is not altogether pessimistic in the end. It is this which causes so many people to say that plays of this kind are merely preaching to the converted. While that is no doubt true to a degree, it does not allow that there are any other aspects to any dramatic picture apart from the story it tells — aspects of character and relationship. For example. There is much truth in the idea that business leaders, governments and the media cast themselves as eternally unjust defendants of the law, and certain unions see their role as fighting outside the law for the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Once such self-images are accepted many of the metaphorical actions of the B-grade movie begin to have their shock in real life. In recognising this we have a foundation for much of the absurd behaviour which characterises public life, and a series of distancing exercises from it. This is much more valuable than any superficial message the "play" may contain.

This is even the case in *Fall-out* and *Follow Me*, the second of the shows we saw, where the anti-nuclear issue is so much meant for me to support. Just as I am unlikely to be converted by the first "play", pro-nuclear people are unlikely to change their minds if they see the second. This is in spite of the fact that *Fall-out* contains one of the most brilliant pieces of irony I have seen in the Popular Theatre Troupe's work.

This is the sequence where Nicola Scott, as a notoriously warning portrayal of a bourgeois gardening expert, takes us through a few little do's and don'ts in cultivating the charming, whimsical plant ("not to be confused with the common atomic bomb weed"). Discussing matters of soil economy in the literal terms of a domestic gardening problem, coupled with the antithesis between growing things and the destructive potential of atomic war, makes the sketch a harrowing piece of sick humour.

While the content of the programme was thrown into interesting focus by the situation, the performances, geared for non-theatre buildings, was not. There was a demonstration in the back of a theatre which detracted from those special skills the company has developed, and called for areas of technique which they normally do not require and could not supply.

The effect was something like a good League Club performer trying to give a chamber recital. Popular theatre is most vital when it is with the people.



An innovation by Mr George that is certainly worth repeating

FOUR PLAY READINGS

TONY BAKER

Four play readings by the South Australian Theatre Company on *Theatre 62*, Adelaide. *Let's Twist Again* by Bob George, *Swimming for Andrew* by Geoff Dely, *Am Foot-Cup* by Ken Woodfield and *The Right Man* by Ken Ross. July 28-31, 1977.

Bob George's arrival as its new artistic director seems to have begun a period of considerable innovation for the South Australian Theatre Company, new faces, new approaches and, most recently, a new format.

Between the end of part one of his first season and the launching with *Am Foot-Cup* of the second, has come this brief series of Australian play readings.

Mr George was quoted on the local press as saying the season was an attempt to foster a constructive relationship between the company and Australian writers — particularly those living in South Australia. Given the male hierarchy that most theatre producers that is a Laodicean and sterile aim in itself.

It also provided the small audiences who turned up — paying only \$5 each — with stimulating entertainment and, hopefully, encouraged Mr George to repeat the experiment. He added to both the stimulation and the experimental nature of the occasion by having the author present and, with him and the readers, conducting a discussion period with the audience afterwards.

Now a critic's confession: personal convenience meant it was only to attend only two of the four evenings: coincidentally the two produced by Mr George himself! Bruce Dehman directed *Let's Twist Again* and David Young, *Am Foot-Cup*. Sincerely speaking these remarks are then confined to those two plays.

First the *Swimmers*. In addition to the discomfort of an Adelaide winter's night (it actually snowed in the Hills on one of them) as a disappointed theatre-goer only designed for winter's time but also under the light park of the main support, the cast had apparently had only a brief opportunity to go through the songs before the

readings. This made for a number of fluffs, particularly in *The Right Man*, dominating from the general high level of professionalism and handling the mood.

More seriously, the format of a reading with a limited time allowed, for me anyway, to highlight structural faults or basic improbabilities in the plays, and neither was free of them: that that consensus should be kept in the context of general success. The presentation, with the director sitting, to one side providing the audience with brief stage settings and directions, was good, the readings able and the plays worthwhile. Mr Dely's I found the more interesting. A puzzle play in the sense that it is capable of various interpretations, and the subsequent discussion established, it centres on a young man Duncan Anderson and the murder and sexual exploitation of a beautiful schoolboy several years before (Rehearsed from a period on a mental hospital) he contacts an old friend now apparently married up with a neo-man movement. Is it all fantasy or Dely's own? And the friend and a former schoolteacher, and, now apparently landlord of the flat where most of the action takes place, really fascist, plutocrat? Are they guilty of the original murder? Such territory has been explored before but, especially with a knowledgeable guide, it repays a new visit.

Mr Ross's play is more conventionally accessible. It is about the aged prostitute who was for a while by-election of a political candidate who personifies purity and absolute integrity, as the campaign progresses he is corrupted or tempted, according to him, into compromise and into an act of betrayal. Familiar country opinion but it can be effective theatre. Mr Ross did, however, have some trouble with his characters as seemingly not being quite sure whether to develop them fully or whether to portray them as types, for instance the candidate is named Hope and other characters include Crawley and Wheeler. Another problem for anybody acquainted with politics as this is played is that amid the ostensible realism are a couple of fundamental improbabilities. Content again, though. We have Mr George's word for it that these evenings were arranged to generate such responses. Certainly the authors, such as they must have been hoping for full productions, have reason to be grateful to him. And so have the audiences.

Next time, and there should be a next time, one hopes for a little more preparation and for the company to find more comfortable surroundings, perhaps the environmental Space at the Festival Centre.

It is a score full of delights, unexpected turns and fluidity

THE CORPORATION OF POPPER

MICHAEL MORLEY

The Corporation of Popper by Monty Verdé. Libretto G.F. Boccia. Directed by Raymond Leppard. State Opera of South Australia, The Playhouse, Adelaide. Opened 18 July 1977. Director: Adrian Newb. Designer: John Corvino. Conductor: Myra Friedman. Performers: Paolo Bonaguidi, Sylvia, Angela Deming, Anna, Deborah Phillips, (Chorus) John Steel, Kent Solter, Valerio, Kevin Miller, Norval Solter, Luciano, Thomas Edwards. Popper, Wilma, Hanna, Myra, Gregory Deming, Annika, Norma Knight, Gloria, Daphne Harris, Geraldine, Papa, Hallelujah, Emma, Ruth Hampton, Patricia Henderson, Angela Deming, Lorraine, Lorraine David, Emma.

On the face of it, the choice of Monty Verdé's *The Corporation of Popper* would not have seemed to hold much box-office appeal for Adelaide audiences. They are hardly the most reliable public for new or adventurous works, and postmodern — or even postmodernist — might well have contemplated a lukewarm response to musical and dramatic action which could seem spare and restricted to the devotees of Puccini and Verdi. But the production has triumphantly vindicated the choice of the work and it is to be hoped that centres other than Adelaide will get the opportunity to appreciate the extraordinary musical richness and superb characterisation of a work which as conductor Myra Friedman points out, is far from being a "musical fiasco". To my (subjectively prejudiced) eye and ear, there is more human emotion and musical truth in the characters and score of *Popper* than in all the villainously lengthy and monumentally displayed musical assaults of *Travis* and *André*.

Popper does in three most familiar works, may well seem to fit Verdi's view of opera as "a play representing life from another world, whose inhabitants have no speech but sing, no emotions but gestures and no passions but attitudes". But when song is so impressive, the attitudes as convincing and the gestures as eloquent as here, one can be grateful to Mount Opera for reminding us of the immaturity of a work that three hundred years have done nothing to rob of its appeal and power.



There were laughs,
but this
time the oohs and
ahs were not there

MARCEL MARCEAU

MARILIBRITTE WELLS

Marcel Marceau presented by Michael Uhlly International and Denis Glynn's Canberra Theatre. Canberra: ACT. Opened 18 July 1991

Marcel Marceau, presenter of cards. Place Forum, Sydney. Manager: Maurice Cassanova

True humility is the red rose in the black top hat of showmanship, and there is something rather sad about an artist who takes three curtain calls (plus three at an interval), when his audience is only prepared to give two. The sight of the great performer bowing and smirking deprecatingly to a thunder of adulation which was really only appreciative applause, was a comic which plucked the heartstrings as much as any other in the programme. It happened for two reasons, because he attempted too much and because he attempted too little.

In introducing the 'style exercises', like walking against the wind and the shrinking cage, which are a beginning audience's introduction to the art, and in advertising an 'all new programme', the Compagnie de Marie Marcel Marceau seemed to be acknowledging that it is quite easy to become blasé about marionettes. Those who were away seemed, their aprons purged at their first revelation of such a fairly new genre, had now recovered from the shock, and were back, waiting more expectantly. The programme itself acknowledged it in pretending just a little too much the magnificent artifice of marionettes and the marionette-ness of Marceau. But the marionettes were still full of little displays of virtuosity meant to amuse the uninitiated, the sculptor, struggling under the weight of a statue, in an upturning thigh-poll, the weight-lifter, sinking in the floor in the splits, the mask maker who changed his acoustic masks with lightning speed, yet never ended up with the wrong expression on his face. There were laughs — plenty of laughs, but the oohs and ahs were not there.



Marceau is no longer quite the revolution his programme was meant to be, and in a large theatre it is hard to see how it could be. The physical subtleties of the most subtle art are lost, if you haven't the advantage of an angle, and if you really should have seen your opium-smeared couple of months ago, then all that remains for you are the thigh-polls and the splits and the lightning changes. The shadows on the muscles of the hand that make a close-up of Youth, Maturity, Old Age and Death so heart-stopping are gone. If you are there to be amazed by subtlety of technique you will not see it in a five hundred seat theatre, and if you are there for grand one-repeat theatre, deep laughter into the human condition, you will not see that either.

In the final piece, "Bip in the Modern and Future Life" it became only too obvious that Marceau's strength is in elegance and subtlety of execution, not in the conceptual design of his work. It broke his own rule that "A marionette in order to be understood by all, must be simple and clear, without ambiguity". Bip's progress from a bourgeois struggle with modernist eschewal of the future, to the glorious freedom of the future, only to return again to the age, would have made three pieces, but it did not make one. He was a most beautiful ape, who carried the mark of man's conscience. Half a million dollars worth of King Kong was a mere toy monkey on a string beside Marceau, but the audience ended up as bemused as Bip had been, convinced that there was a lot in it, that it was meant to be a profound statement about the future of man, and that it hadn't worked.

Marceau's exquisite "presenter of cards", Pierre Volry, bearded and bearded and bearded like a woman's Blue Boy, sums the whole thing up. His dress and his manner wander between the masculine and the feminine concerns. No-one could wish that Marceau had been content to do the same. His gaggle-eyed misanthrope Bip, leaping after corruption, and his old lady girdling in the park make him an exquisite marionette piece, but "Bip in the Modern and Future Life" had the marionette pseudo-reflexivity of third rate modern dance.

Marceau's art is an art of little things and grand conceptual theatre is just beyond its reach, which is why the thunder of adulation was really only appreciative applause. I felt with the feeling that Marceau is a marionette piece and should have the marionette grandeur to share.



The deft hand of director, Jon Finlayson is seen everywhere as the pace never slackens

THE GLITTER SISTERS

BARRY EATON

The Glitter Sisters. Opera's Hollywood Palace. Sydney. Opened 11 July 1977. Director: Jon Finlayson. Musical director: Glenn Campbell. With Rene Coleman, Maggie Stuart, Geraldine Harvey, Jay Miller, Lynn Lewis.

If you like your entertainment with the music of the farthest dated in a high camp style by two lovely and talented ladies then don't miss the Glitter Sisters.

Following a highly successful run in Melbourne the act has now hit Sydney. No-one here at now stars some well known local ladies.

The show opens with a medley of old songs just to set the scene. Then we take off with a real medley of happy show-pops, five musical numbers, drink, cocktail music and clever impersonations. I loved the show too because with appearances by Dorothy Lamour, Ethel Merman, Dianne Dreyer and a very funny off top Markos Levidis about the stage. Good — but true.

The inevitable appearance of Shirley Temple with (you guessed it!) "The Good Ship Lollipop" nearly brought the house down. The show is a very clever blending of teamwork and individual talent. The deft hand of director, Jon Finlayson is seen everywhere as the pace never slackens.

When the girls first came on stage in their glitzy costumes and lively Andrews Sisters wigs, I was convinced that they were sisters, so much did they look alike. As the evening shows by each sister individually delights the audience at some stage with her personality and talent.

Most of the entertainment is musical and the show can't be faulted here. Unfortunately a couple of the comedy sketches are much too long and not very funny. Particularly the Roy Rogers stand-up which seemed to go on forever.

I almost had to be carried out in the cocktail mixing demonstration. A very lady-like Rene Coleman becomes more and more smothered with each new cocktail

and the result is hilarious. The inevitable follow-on sketch was Spike Jones' "Cookin' for Two" — very well done.

Being a child of the 40's perhaps I was moved subconsciously by the material. Songs like "Rise, Sweet Rose", "Chicago", "I've got a guy in Kalamazoo", "Somewhere, Journey", "Lili Marlene", "As Time Goes By". I could keep on going! A version of "Rogers' Weezy Baggy Boy" that cut Andrews the sisters themselves, plus a lovely Lascio version of the famous "Hump and Coo Coo". These are just some of the delights that the Glitter Sisters deliver, all done in such a high camp style I'm sure the ladies all have permanent tongue indentations in their cheeks.

Long may the Glitter Sisters glit.

Jane Street back in the big time with two undeniable successes

THE HIPPER SHOW: WENT MADDE AGAINST THE WIND, MADDE

FRANK HARRIS

The Hipper Show (and how they, wrote it by Frank Harrish). NEDA production at Jane Street. Sydney. N.S.W. Opened 13 June 1977. Director: Stanley Walsh. Designer: Bill Penland. Musical Director: Norm Gump. Choreography: Roma Ward. Cast: Shirley, Rene Graham, Markos Levidis, Maggie Kilpatrick, Jane Sharpe, Norm Harcourt, Charlie Sharpe, John Farnham, Mr. Hatchy, Don Kent.

Don't Public Appear at Wind, Madde by Kenneth Ross. NEDA production at Jane Street. Sydney. N.S.W. Opened 20 July 1977. Director: John Tasker. Designer: Bill Penland. Cast: Frankie John Chaslin, Ron Graham, Rene Graham, Norman Davies, Neil Harpham, Philip Saines, John Farnham, Thomas Davis, Maggie Farnham, Norman Davies, Michael Ferguson.

Sydney's Jane Street Theatre, offspring of NEDA, is an annual lucky dip in new, unexpected plays.

Sometimes good, even brilliant, sometimes just scraping by and on a few memorable occasions, starting enough to go on to bigger theatres.

The 1977 season paid it back in the big time again with two undeniable successes — Frank Harrish's musical, *The Hipper*

Show (and how they wrote it) and Ken Ross's musical and up-to-the-minute sociological thriller, *Don't Public Appear at Wind, Madde*.

But let's return for the moment to the Jane Street story.

For its first season in 1966 the theatre presented six new plays — with Terry Morphy, Rod Milgate, James Scott and Thomas Kennedy among the authors of these pioneering hits.

Jon Shannon owned the late two years later with his *Tender Hearted* which broke a few barriers but attracted only temporary interest.

Alexander Buzo's *Wanted* was the 1968 winner. It's now in Currency Press publications and will give a stage show.

Jane Street really took off in 1970 with Michael Roddy and Rob Ellis' *King O' Noddy* a mighty success which rumbled like an earthquake under the wall under Wale Theatre ground.

In 1973 came David Williamson's *Don't Public Appear at Wind, Madde* which was to be a stage and film success.

After that, the doldrums for a few years, the only lasting stand-out being Dorothy Hewett's *Don't Public Appear at Wind, Madde* which is still being played around the country.

There are highlights enough to make that justify the theatre's 11 years of life. Now the Harrishs and Ross plays put a bright light on it once again, as one of the most adventurous new-work theatres in Australia.

Harrish's *The Hipper Show*, first of the season, already has American success, having after it.

Ross's play, about a space confrontation with a rebellious monster, is the more powerful — both technically, and timely. Think of the Brekex Hall union war in the Lutheran case.

It's a play with guts and reality enough to give it a high survival rate in its portrayal of a man who backs on his rules — and involves the better certainty of his former match — to defend his individual's sense of conscience.

John Tasker's direction, with a very strong cast, had a tremendous impact on opening night.

Rob and Frank are warlike bachelors and what about now. In the opening scene they scramble on about war stories but are distracted over brilliant tensions.

A weakness still is that this initial passage is over extended before the real point of action is revealed.

Rob, ordered to pay a second levy to Union levy as he calls it) demands a

voluntary vote rather than a compulsory order. He is defeated but refuses to pay.

After that comes the murderous 'sent to Coventry' action against the rebel. No man can defy such a union order and get away with it.

"Don't go against the wind, man," Frank warns ('peddle' is supposed to be more acceptable in the tale) and groans "Why do I have to pick you as a mate when everyone else is normal?"

Mattship goes down the drain. Frank desires his friend and stands by the union.

Bob's wife Theresa, a seemingly quiet one and leaving with breaks under the stress of death threats and hide phone calls and leaves him.

His adored daughter stands up for Dad at first but is pulled away by her fiance, whose business interests are threatened by the cancer-like spread of the union menace.

Bob is left alone, trying with faltering courage to stick to that principal of individual tolerance against the tyranny of "the reachability of unionists' power", as Ross puts it.

Ron Graham (Bob) and Maggie Fitzpatrick (Theresa) worked superbly as they moved from the quiet opening scenes to a shattering climax in which Bob threatens to kill them both with a gunshot. The emotional power of this scene was overwhelming.

John Clayton was excellent as Jeffy Frank and Norm Huxford as real and lively yet touching as the bewildered daughter.

Watch out for Norm Huxford: Steve's an outstanding young actress with soaring potential.

She was a big talent too in *Maternity's The Rigger Show*, which opened the season — not only a clever satire but a fetching singer with instant appeal.

The Rigger Show is a musical within a play — still a bit top-heavy in balance on opening night but with enough sparkle and conviction to make it credible. A rigger show indeed.

Shapel's shorter Shakespeare plays are a pity, run down troops out of love with the public in presenting dated versions of the Bard, despite the talented Richard Hill, which opens the show.

To keep up the box office returns they turn to "sex and violence" and build a hit with a musical based on the then current news headline horror — Jack the Rigger and his six murders.

It's crazy, and sometimes macabre, but a very funny musical, with catchy songs by Jeremy Barlow and, under Stanley Walsh's expert direction, engaging work from the merry murder singers and dancers — Ron Graham, Maggie Fitzpatrick, John Farnham, Don Red (powerful as the man who falls under the Rigger's spell), and of course Norm again. Her comic song, "I Married a Monster", was a show stopper.

When I saw *Rigger* the show still needed tightening but its potential is obvious. No wonder the *Australian* are interested.

Frank Harris is started and music critic for the *Frank Mirror*.



A virtuoso performance by both writer and actor

A STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION

REN CHAMPHORN

A Stretch of the Imagination by Jack Hibbert
Australian Performing Group at the Newend
Drama Centre, Sydney, Nov. 1981. Opened 2 July
1981. Directed, Paul Thompson, art designer,
John Keating, lighting designer, Laurel Frank
Tyson, set design, Mark O'Neill, Max Giller.

This is the hardest kind of review to write: the evening was perfectly acceptable. The play, production and performance were all equally accomplished and, to make it harder, freely interwoven in one act, making analysis difficult. And finally, I'm not even able to compare Max Giller's talent O'Neill with any of the other Mark O'Neills, since this is the first time I've seen the play performed.

I've always had the feeling that a one-man play is something of a contradiction in terms — as if drama can only happen between two or more persons. I don't think the feeling can be logically defended, but the notion of spending the evening with only one actor always gives me a slightly sickening sensation. Jack Hibbert's character has imaginary visitors from time to time, he acts out all sorts of roles and is about as vivid and extravagant in language as anyone could ever want him to be. But I still felt the lack of another voice, another face — not because Mark O'Neill (as played by Max Giller) was in any way outshined by himself, but for purposes of comparative evaluation, for contrast.

Against that I must set the feeling that the Newend Drama Centre space has never been used to better advantage: the scale of the performance, the size of the set in relation to the number of the audience and the placing of the audience in the space seemed just right. (Contrast it, for example, with Gordon Chesser's *Benjamin Franklin* in the same space where one seemed to get a bit more perspective, see them in a larger context.)

I watched the play then, for the first time, without having read it, and I would like to record the fact that I was continuously reminded of the plays of Samuel Beckett. I found myself comparing the play, in particular, with *Krapp's Last Tape* — the old man with his memories, his business, his drinking, his recollections of sexual/sexual experience, his character's time-distorted sense of being. I began to see Mark O'Neill as an Australian version of a Beckett character and, somehow, by extension, as a symbol of Australian literary identity — Mark (or Hibbert), the hermit in the bush, playing with the names of Frost and Plath (or Beckett), fragments from the distant cultural tradition. And then all the wonderful comparative differences: the particular, topical, cryptic, amusing, Harry-Murphy-like, general-audience-directed mismanagement of the Australian dialogue as opposed to the universal, tradition-emerging, serious reduction of Beckett's.

I suspect these somewhat sweeping generalisations are an indication of the way my mind was running in relation to Beckett during and immediately after the performance. The next day I bought a copy of the play and found to my surprise, that both the author, or his introduction, and Margaret Williams, in her preface, were at some point to reject any linking Jack Hibbert, addressing himself to potential directors, says "it is imperative to exorcise from thought and scribbling the fatal figure of Samuel Beckett

Indeed, *A Search of the Imagination* can plausibly be viewed as an indirect response to the increasingly national and imposed gaze. For Monk O'Neill through a self-willed exile and part-time misanthrope, wrestling obsessively with his own immortality, death, is ultimately on the side of growth and human perceptivity. "And a page earlier Margaret Williams is saying: 'Survive is as far removed as possible from the Beckett limbo world. It is an affirmation, even celebration, of life in the face of inevitable death.' " Paul Thompson's production was evidently sufficient in 'misreading' Beckett for the idea that I don't really see the need for those disclaimers — would the play have to be disqualified from its title as "the first unimpeachable Australian theatrical classic" (according to the aforementioned professor) if I admitted too openly to a European springboard? And anyway, I've not convinced that a life and death embracing play is intrinsically better than one that haunts and repines the process, nor do I think it any more than a vague generalisation to associate the totality of Beckett's work with either alternative.

One of the things I wondered about was the degree of realism intended: could this couple of ideas, feelings, opinions add up to a real human being? (Yes, that I necessarily think they should — I was, only pondering the intention.) Here are a few of Monk's attributes which particularly caught my fancy: he makes his will as fierce as 'the Aboriginal peoples of Australia' and 'the populus Oriental nation of the north'; he repines his distraction of the one last time in the arena, daily wrestling with his own 'heterogeneous' wiles; a 'preaching topology' which will one day replace it, he is the omniscient one of allusions of Xavier who was, nevertheless more physical than metaphysical, he is a romantic disillusioned by women, the floorwalker who directed the winning brother in the grand final of 1907; he recites readings from Wittgenstein with improvisations by Gap Salazar; the second busconductor down in the gutter; duelling Oliver, and his own once supple discipline, entwined the corners on many a Saturday night at the Salazar bar of the Shamrock.

Of course we see Monk through his own eyes, just as we see the curious day through which he is living: an over-the-contrary production for the morning and the possible security of 'immersion of the making parts' in David Day over characters in the first half of the play, while the second takes place on what seems to be a sub-zero night-time, mysteriously followed by a sunset. The script clarifies that a hot, windy morning is followed by a cold, overcast afternoon. Monk's constant returning to the alarm clock as Mori's grove which begins the play and which stops at twelve, conformation to a feeling that the whole play is outside clock time in much the same way that Monk is outside the society that he has rejected, but to which his thought is continually returns. In a way you can only understand Monk as a personal rejection of the society we live in. And the reality of the

spectator seems to me to be Jack Hibberd's, surely the misanthrope of the west, the seer of the world ("... two skeletons floundered on a field of alfalfa") can only be accidental and not intended on the metaphorically observed situation of an aged recluse.

On this score Jack Hibberd says that the actor's talents "should be employed to capture a complex character of unostentatious dimensions, to render coherent and dramatically organic a splintered day in a contracting life, to manifest and shape variously all manner of personal and emotional realities." Max Gellies seems to me to take the right approach when he reads Monk's aged stiffness into a sort of acrobatic display, when he acts out roles like both water and dirt at his various domestic moments — with wood lighting when he takes equal advantage of the cologne! ("... perked the Nabern Star up against a flying waitress and went for a swim up the Seine, introducing the *Australian Crawl to the Frog*") and the lottery ("Hark! Shhh! Hear the present action past! (Pause) Not the talk, look of needles and soap, but a continuous and silent avalanche"), when, in short, he sharpens up such moments into its own reality, playing all the various aspects of the character and the meaning for all they are worth and feeling coherence and the dramatic organizes, look after themselves.

It does add up to a virtuoso performance by both writer and actor. And there's surely nothing wrong with that.

Thankfully Act Four asserts its own shattering power over the production

THREE SISTERS

NORMAN KESSLE

Three Sisters, by Anna Chekhov translated by Ronald Harpelle, Old Tote Theatre Company in the Opera House Drama Theatre, Sydney, opened 12 July 1997. Director: William Redmond. Design: James Redwood. Original music: Nigel Bonarley. Lighting: Jerry Lutz. Props: Monica Vaughan. Props: Elizabeth Alexander. Choreography: Ben Gabriel. Costume: Norma Harris. Set/cost: John Krummel. Music: Jennifer Clancy. Actors: Geraldine Anderson, Ian Hughes, Pauline, Ben Holman, Andrew Peter Whitford, Kaitlyn, Tim Ebert, Miriela, Jacki Weaver, Felicity, Anthony Martin. Book: Robert Harpelle. Music: Lynne Perle.

The more one reflects on the Old Tote Theatre Company's new production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, the more obvious it becomes to the viewer staged in 1986.

Reported to have aimed this time for a more realistic approach, director William Redmond's production is for the most part as superficial as designer James Redwood's impressionistic settings, each with

undercurrents geographical boundaries and openings across or through which characters wander haphazardly. Even the harsh iron are presented symbolically with a succession of long, slender, leaning poles.

Once again, it seems, a designer has been deflected by the inhospitable breadth of the Opera House Drama Theatre's stage.

The living rooms of the Prozorovs' country house, setting for Acts I and II, was apparently intended to permit the sort of on-going action John Clark used so effectively in his recent Old Tote production of *The Alchemist*.

Some characters enter through the dining room doors, apparently having come in via the front door, while others stroll on from a dark end of the aisle, some more indelicately than Natasha, who steps out, grins before an imaginary mirror downstage, then turns and runs up into the back-stage, fully revealed, dining room.

When Andrew brings her back downstage to propose, the audience has to imagine them out of sight of the rest of the family, tacitly talking and acting in the dining room table.

I found all this not only distracting, but a negation of Chekhov's carefully drawn portraits of these members of a strata of Russian middle class as utterly self-contained and totally unaware and unconcerned of anything outside their own petty world. In the downstage living room where they chat, squabble and philosophise, they are physically distanced by the width of the playing area, but there is an obvious effort to treat them as a group.

Kenneth Tynan in his book, *Curiouser*, quotes Peter Osborne as contending that teamwork and Chekhov are, in acting terms, incompatible. Usage doubtless has characters as solitaries who sometimes interrupt others talking, but never listen to what anyone is saying, which is what makes them both funny and appalling. (One reviewer was surely about audience laughter, but surely Chekhov sought this also?)

Tynan says this was far comment by Osborne, adding that in *Three Sisters* it is a technique carried so far as it can go without blowing the play comedically apart.

Be that as it may, there is a distance about the first two acts of this production that begins to be disrupted at a fairly better Act III when the characters are introduced and the emotional salience of thoughts and act emphasised. Here one feels at last some understanding of and sympathy for the sisters' longing for a better life in far-off Moscow — even though we know from experience it is a wish never to be fulfilled.

Thankfully, Act IV — one of the best ever written and well-staged in the translation by Dr Ronald Harpelle from the definitive Moscow version — asserts its own shattering power over the production.

True, even here one craps about details — the pedestrian parting between Irina and Tuzenbach in the latter goes off to fight the duel in which he will die or the

slow march around the stage by the bespectacled Audrey parking a gram — but an audience that had been showing no more than half-hearted approval was at last aroused to genuine-sounding enthusiasm.

Richard's setting in general was sound, more so than in his choice of Jennifer Clure as Masha. That is a beautifully controlled performance from start to finish, his growing love for Yvonneka subtly suggested by look or smile, her grief at their parting clearly heart-rending.

Morone Mangan as Olga and Elizabeth Alexander as Irina are competent though inclined to be colorless, but that slightly delightful screen Queen Ashton's Anita remained a North Shore house wearing a headscarf.

A virtuoso performance saves one play, fine ensemble playing makes another

BOING BOING THE HOSTAGE

ELLY WAGNER

Boing Boing by Mark Camoletti. Adapted by Morley Kane and Doug Fisher. Produced by J.A. Williamson Productions and Michael Bailey International Pty Ltd. Civic Theatre, Newcastle, NSW. Opened July 1977. Director: Doug Fisher. Design: Bill Hume. Music: Doug Fisher. Lyrics: Ken, Alan, David, David. Musical Numbers: Robert, Richard O'Sullivan. Accoutrements: Judith Woodhouse, Judith Paula Bowman.

The Hostage by Brendan Behan. NIDA Arts/Graeco Theatre. Newcastle University, Newcastle NSW. Opened July 1977. Director: George Whaley. DESIGNER: Mark Mager. Musical Director: Brian Cameron. Pat, Stephen, Roger, Meg, John, David, Ken, Sarah, Margaret, Margaret, John, Patrick, Louise, Irene, Mary, Susan, Emma, Virginia, Ron, Mike, Peter, Margaret, Emma, Emma, Margaret, Mr. Mitchell, Robert, Margaret, Miss Catherine, Linda, Patricia, Lucie, William, Anthony, Patrick, Teresa, Derek, Lawrence, Robert, Susan, Wayne, Janet, IRA Officers, Alan Byrne, IRA Volunteers, Mel Gibson.

The Williamson/Bailey production of *Boing Boing*, which started its tour (Newcastle, Sydney, and Brisbane) at Newcastle Civic Theatre, is quite distinguished by a vehicle on which to perch important stars (of *More About the Hostage*) Richard O'Sullivan. As much as it was perhaps a good chance, because only a normal actor of his ability could rescue the tired and rather unconvincing force from being an evening of boredom, and it is because very obviously the performance of the night.

The play centres around the once during, idea of the man who manages to juggle his

three on-hostess business and constantly keep two in the act and one in the hand with the help of an airplane unstable. Unfortunately the weather and increasing speed of air travel cause his schedules to go awry, which is when Richard O'Sullivan, as the unapproachable and around friend from Aus turns up to stay and join in the fun. The play lifted with the applause that greeted his entrance and from then on the laughs came fairly steadily, and almost entirely from O'Sullivan's incredible ability to transform appalling lines into something of his own brand of burlesque comedy, and create wry business, for himself and others which took on the impossible logic of true farce.

This farcical and vaudeville performance, though it covered some of the play's flaws, also managed (though without emotional understating) to establish the play's potential, so that all the other characters needed to pale helplessly into stereotyped Doug Fisher (also the director, and second Alan *About the Hostage* star) was amiable as the naive architect who later is rely on his more bumbling friend as the doors of different bedrooms close with increasing rapidity, but really not strong enough in the straight man to O'Sullivan's full gay. At times O'Sullivan had to play his own straight man as well, so he able to get in the full gay elements.

The three on-hostess were hard to deride, and they all determined their own partners, true, they often had little to do but sit or stand around and look on, but when involved in repetitive scenes of them showed experienced enough directors to which the unimpaired roles Paula Bowman as the farcically romantic German who eventually falls for Richard O'Sullivan made more of the part than the other two.

Nonconformist taste is reputed to be strange and unpredictable, but possibly it is tougher and more discriminating than that of those used to more and a greater variety of theatre. In its role for this play, of out-of-town try out, playing bright as to Sydney's London, it has not engaged well for the further run of *Boing Boing*. The show drew minimal audiences and had to finish as an over-the-top early, and all this in spite of Richard O'Sullivan's grin following. Although Richard O'Sullivan has been playing *Boing Boing* — in Britain before Australia — for some time, the show had overall an under-rehearsed feel to it, which will perhaps have departed as the tour progresses. Though the star turns in a virtuoso performance, it would be preferable to see him in a better, perhaps more modern, comedy, that allows others a chance to shine too.

There were no virtuoso performances in *The Hostage*, the 1977 final year NIDA students' production, which made its annual trip in Newcastle and Geelong, but the House afterwards an excellent demonstration of ensemble playing that far much of the production worked very well. The situation holding *The Hostage* together is that of a young soldier takes in a hostage against the backdrop the following mar-

rang of a Belfast youth for killing an Ulster policeman.

The IRA officers hold the soldier in a lodging house/bedroom which houses a gallery of characters, or caricatures ranging through gaudy prostitutes and homosexuals to doctors from the Tiresias. The soldier himself, played with some endearing postcard frankness by Anthony Price, makes his first appearance at the end of Act 1, which should leave plenty of time for the character of the house to establish the status quo of themselves and their relationships, before the catalyst is thrown in.

The two who stand out among the others are old Pat, caretaker of the house and veteran IRA man, and his long-standing consort Meg. Their loving fighting partnership, mellowed a little by time, is crucial to the establishment of the lodging house, other inmates may come and go, but these two will always be there. Somehow, through the great attention paid to the detail of such characters, the impact of the play was shattered in George Whaley's production. Meg seemed to have no closer relationship with Pat than either of the other two old women.

Stephen Bailey as Pat was very competent and effectively aged, if it takes a while too ponderous to extract the full humor from the part.

Visually the production was a delight — with a terrific set designed by Mark Mager, that surely had two parts of three stars to a pottering looking, rather than the usual single high staircase, and providing interesting and full spaces which George Whaley used in their last, maintaining constant movement that was only occasionally distracting. The songs were well done, and revealed some beautiful singing voices, especially in Sarah McKenna and Judy Davis. The adaptation and representations around the text (mentioned in the programme notes are interesting, if not totally effective). The second act seemed to drag, in some places, and the conversion to the Greek ending of having the soldier shot on the cupboard was confusing, particularly as it was not clear from watching the graffiti that it was the sympathetic IRA man who shot him by mistake, and not, for instance, Meg. But *The Hostage* is a play that is never truly effective in performance structurally and always suffers from the very fine introduction of the young soldier and the fact that the second act is a boring game — a long night that everyone wishes would end. The love affair between he and Teresa, though mostly played in this production, and well contrasted with the affairs of the women, particularly that of the housemaid Ros Ann and Patricia Grace, is too slow and apologetic to warrant the emphasis then played on it at the end. It wouldn't weigh out any one of the 1977 NIDA graduates as a potential star of the Australian stage, but their abilities in ensemble playing seem to show far greater promise for heart theatre going than the reputation of a star whose sparkling efforts could only hold together a stumbling evening.

Playscript

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE



MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE PART 2

LADIES' SCENE

Mrs. Duggan's cab arriving at coach waiting a few places or six. Liza enters, unconscious, glances at Mrs. D.

Mrs. D. What's wrong with you?

Liza. Nigel has left me.

Mrs. D. That's not my fault.

Liza. Yes it is.

Mrs. D. How?

Liza. It was you who reared me in a petty and romantic fashion.

Mrs. D. I reared you according to the best traditions.

Liza. Precisely. That's why I'm petty and romantic, a dope and a greenhorn. That's why I fell headlongly in love with Nigel. That's why, he left me.

Mrs. D. He was a top.

Liza. I know that now.

Mrs. D. You've learned your lesson, then?

Liza. Thanks to you and that society's chaste, half rules for ladies.

Mrs. D. Well, now you might be able to find yourself a real man.

Liza. Liza Dool.

Mrs. D. Hold your tongue!

Liza. (sings)

Liza Dool, my urbane warty father

Who rears his home but once a week,

Who loves the theatre and its worries,

rather,

Who rears his home to wash and not to soap.

Liza. I thought you would be reared your lesson by now.

Mrs. D. How do you know I haven't? I have been all over town. You should complain about society-weighted rules. I have had no square for the purpose of a happy marriage for twenty years.

Liza. Even to the extent of taking me in your world?

Mrs. D. Better late than never.

Sings

When will we women escape from our chains,

Thus aside the garden of love and romance,
When will we ignore the drudgery of
quarantine

And cease to kiss the cuffs of our
husband's pants?

Liza. (singing) Look at Mrs. Coop,
mother of seven, shackled to the mangle
and the oven while her husband bores and
scoffles around the town.

*Cut to Mrs. Coop, now manfully plugging
laundry in the mangle.*

Mrs. Coop. (sings)

I'm out turning the mangle

Until one mistake go black

While a dozen or a couple

To sweat turn in Turok's

Press.

Mrs. D. And Mrs. Park, wife of our Chief
Sergeant, look at her, childless and lone
devoted to a stoop reduced to pottering
around her garden, putting tenderly her
tulips, feeding her hyacinths, and rearing
businesslike mantles.

Cut to Mrs. Park in her garden.

Mrs. Park. (sings)

Some men make to make Peter pink,

Some women to make Julie blue,
I read

My husband's breath is a perfumed stink.

There is a sound of snoring in my bed
Forever.

Liza. (to Mrs. D.) Sober?

Mrs. Park. Unconscious married marriage.

Mrs. D. (singing), Miss Helen Hobbles, a
suffragette and social pariah, a figure of
fun, who, for example, was mocked by so-
called temperance at a recent dinner.
Naturally she was the only woman there.

These amiable logicians cast her into the
gutter and returned just in time to toast
Vobiscum.

Miss Hobbles. (sings)

All men think I am a hump

They're frightened, of course

They think I'll crush their punch

They like their London all course

So do we. We have a heart and mind and

dash.

**Why should I not be free, free to think,
feel and loch?**

Reference. *Alfonsine to the contrary.*

All (sings)

Yes? Why shouldn't we be free,

At home and in the streets

In the theatre, university and government
and

Even from social and marital tyranny,
Free from masculine muscle and men?

Yes? Why shouldn't we be free?

We've worked our fingers to the bone,

We've put our guts into this country,

Our worries and life in the home.

In droughts and depression we saved The
Landings!

Yes? Why shouldn't we be free,

Threw the roofers off our roofs,

Equality is a joke in this Democracy

We have built, kind with bullets the zone,

We'll mean no longer and stand up to you!

TEMPERANCE- SUFFRAGETTE SCENE

*The company enters with business ap-
proach on sighted up and down the
directing company.*



SONG FOR A SOBER CHRIST

We sing to Thee O Sober Christ
Oh Virtue and Temperance
We fight Your light from door to door.
With Bible, kindergarten and beer

Our armies will advance in strength
Noble Your alcoholic flag
We will defeat the Evil Drink
Rejoice all sinners and be glad

We love this peaceful, stable land,
Here we will build Jerusalem
Milk and honey will be our wine,
Sobriety our strongest

Come, all Australians, march with us,
Erudite businessmen,
Consume the products and pump
To consumption of tobacco

Rejoice all sinners and be glad,
The Day of Glory is at hand
Fishes in our bathtub tanks,
We want a sober Christian land

Rejoice all sinners and be glad
Turn drunkenness to a dream
The Holy Bible is our book,
Sobriety and work our theme?

Musica: From time immemorial, Indians and gentlemen, banished beverages have sipped and dragged the will of man. Wine was the cheese and dowdiness of Ancient Rome. Champagne, a champagne wine, died gliding from its generous efforts — delicious terrors. The Kings of France, their starved progenies, were conscious swimmers of euphoric fluids. Many a pickled and imperial royal corpse has been borne down the streets of not-so Paris. To this day the consumption of general alcohol is a Roman Catholic and Pope, pervasion. Search a soul and you'll find a sozzler. Witness the process, Pope, paradoxically called Pius, whose purple robes are so coloured from the grape-juice that perpetually soaks from the pores of his sweat-dribe in a little wonder, then, that his pronouncements on reliability are the outpourings of an inebriate, a blessed luncheon?

Chorus:

Musica: Sobriety is the god of the Irish. It is a Catholic marker, a glistening compass rose of the brain, a black plague in their souls! We must unite to fight the evils and cast of these various depredations. Erudite the best! Absolute best! Ban all vineyards and breweries! **(Chorus)** Arrise, all inebriated! Confine them to the asylums!

Chorus: A drunk leaps up and attacks **Musica:** He is dragged off and ejected

Musica: Thank you. I must apologize for that intensely incident. The polluted hospital has been severely cast into the gutter whence he came. Our final speaker this evening is the Chief Secretary of Victoria, Sir Wallace Pork, who has magnanimously agreed to grace the meeting with his presence

Pork: I can assure you all that my trustworthy officers are at this very moment in time clapping the notorious Sir Corrigan in prison. I stand for law and order. I stand for decency and high moralizing, moral standards in the community. **Chorus:**

I thank you. It has been my policy as Chief Secretary to come down, with warning severity against intemperance and drunken insurrection. As you are well aware, these liquid sciences material rapidly into quagmires of moral degeneracy, dissimulation, misdeeds, criminal misdeeds, inefficiency, waste, even anarchy in our civil law-abiding streets! Furthermore, it has been my own personal concern, even abstinence, to stamp out all excesses of the flesh in this colony. To this end I have served, consumed and confided, and numerous lead and import units, absolute violence whose sole purpose is to pollute, deprave and corrupt our chaste minds. This very year I have signed personally five slapping. Gay Lardons guilty of excessive defecation. Their backs were like raw meat!

Chorus:

I thank you. Furthermore, fifteen footballs have been closed down, the whom have been drenched with carbolic and dispatched to the care of religious missionaries where they led honestly at the temple and how. Twenty Oscar Wildes have been thrown into prison and locked to the edge of death. If I had my way, they would all be castrated!

Chorus:

Ladies and gentlemen, I can proudly declare that solitary, abortion, infanticide, fornication, haggery and vanity are now in the dock!

Chorus:

Melbourne is now a decent and delicate city. Her streets are placid and temperate. Her citizens sober and virtuous. Our sons and daughters, abused and misbegotten in the past, can look forward to an epoch of conscience and equality. God save the Queen!

Chorus: They all march out singing as before leaving Sir Wallace Pork at a table

Last two verses *Song for a Sober Christ*

THE BROTHEL SCENE

Corrigan enters as a waiter. He flares round onto up the scene perhaps. Sir Pork

Pork (after a while, impatiently) Corrigan!

Corrigan: Sir Pork, the stable is yours to big

Pork: To what?

Corrigan: To what?

Pork: Can you drink?

Corrigan (sipping slowly): One highball

Pork: And something to eat

Corrigan: Something?

Pork: (St) Is he here?

Corrigan: Or perhaps a three-Ban grocer dressed in Indian rags

Pork: (Pork?)

Corrigan: I can recommend the gravy. **Supper:**

Pork: I need more, **Corrigan:**

Corrigan: A ham sandwich?

Pork: Bring me a roast of pork. Two legs. A roast. An apple, roasted, with potatoes, pumpkin, parsnip, portulaca and fishings of blackberry jelly. To be followed by dumplings, cream and toothpicks. **Henry:** Don't forget the port. It must be Portuguese and black as ink. *Corrigan:* I shall return, Sir Muson. (To the audience.) With a pat of the port. *He laughs and leaves*

SONG OF SIR PORK

I am Sir Wallace Pork,
In public I am a pig,
So Christmas in my talk
Is private I am a pig

I feel the ropes
With morning wags
And night's ragman,
The poor guttable birds

I've made a million pounds
And a staffed as many cracks
I got food by the mouth
And fast on pressing blacks

I have a wife and kids,
She gives me the hand that
I hate all Chicks and Yids
But love their coloured tits

When I die I'll die in,
I'll sit Henry the Eighth
They'll behead in a vat
And tell the soap in crusts

I don't believe in Hell,
But in Heaven I do
Up there I'll do as well
As any bloody Jew

Corrigan enters bearing (mutter) a huge can of wine. Pork snatches it from him. Corrigan leaves. Pork shows the usual in one long pull and burp of over the head.

He belches and groans in a pained fashion. Corrigan enters bearing the most prodigious plate piled high with succulent food (mutter). Sir Pork devours and groans as it is consumed. He attacks the food, now with his hands etc. in the most obscene and disgusting manner.

Corrigan watches intensely.

Pork (after a while, between mouthfuls) Is this here?

Corrigan: No

Pork: Why not?

Corrigan: Don't ask me. Ask Madame Suspicious. Here she is.

Madame Suspicious enters wearing a brother hat etc. and is caught in a paralytic light. Pork, page 10



SONG OF THE HOTHOTEL-KEEPER SUSPENDUE

Though I is wild and a little fat
I feel occasionally fit on my back
When the work comes thick and fast,
I grovel and grovel in a heap
It helps to pay the rent
And the Government
Accepts the wall and Salvo from the door
Helps pay for another unexpected
Shave

I know
I fit in Lonsdale Street in our clean hotel,
We pride ourselves on being electric
We pride ourselves on being hot and
strong and sane

Strong enough to square the beer from
the biggest man!

Members of Parliament
Our establishment frequently frequents
Here they come to dip their wicks
The young the old with their walking
sticks

Relieve their passions for a price,
Free from syphilis and lice,
Free from their wives and daughters
In perfume and pillowed quarters

Up in Lonsdale St. etc.

Solutions, architects and doctors,
Back to death of doors and lives and woe,
Come here for relaxation and enjoyment,
And to do their bit for home and unemployment.

THINK!
Speculations and businessmen
Know we're always open,
Offshoots of our army come here in
regiments.

To engage in guiney and artillery
barricaments

Up in Lonsdale St. etc.

Inside these protected walls,
Hit is and isn't as it decided in scores,

Underhand deals in property are
appreciated
And fat percentages integrated
For we work within the Law
The Chief of Police is our chief bull and
hero
We a guy, him for the night to produce
The Government forgets our taxes
Up in Lonsdale St. etc.

Park (to Mademoiselle): 'I have a Lulu'
Madame: 'Who's coming, Sir?' etc. etc.
Corrigan: 'I bet she's'
Park: 'I can stand respectfully'
Madame (addressing): 'I'm here'
Purse
Park: 'Come over here'
Madame: 'I'm very expensive'
Park: 'Come over here, but wait'
Park: 'I have Mademoiselle Supendue's catches
here and here in her in the floor, knowing her
etc. Corrigan hits the plate and down the
post. First starts

So Park attacks First: 'America has down
and proceeds to kick him. Thomas then
intervenes

Best: 'What's going on here?'
Madame: 'So William has just attacked'
My back here, My Best
Corrigan: 'Best Team'
Best to Park: 'Are you mad?'
Park: 'Never been more sane. Thomas'
Best: 'Shouldn't you apologise?'
Park: 'No need to here'

First: 'It's me along recently to seek some in-
formation from you. I know, you'd be here
in return I have a most lucrative propo-
sition to put to you

Park (surprised): 'Lorraine?'
First: 'Yes'
Park: 'Out with it'

First: 'I'd much rather talk privately
Then back here at Best'
Park: 'Over here then. Bad luck. Tom'
They walk to one side. First talks right to
Madame but then starts to overhear
their conversation

Park: 'What information would you want?'
First: 'I wish to know the size of the new
bridge projected to cross the Yarra'
Park: 'Known'

First: 'I know you know'
Park: 'Sure of all, what's your proposition?'
First: 'It involves the purchase of all the
land on either side of the Yarra. I will
establish a special company to deal with
the or, investment I need your co-
operation. Are you at all attracted?'
Park: 'Yes'

Park: 'Where is First's car for a new
first comes closer to hear on his face'
Park: 'Excellent. I'll start work on it
first thing in the morning. All agreed?'
First extends a hand to shake. Park refers
to take it

Park (winking off): 'Agreed'
Lulu comes
Park (groaning): 'Lulu'
Lulu: 'Bride'

She giggles. Park: 'I have her catches her
and puts her in the floor. First leaves,
sneaking into Supendue's room. First the
Chief of Police: 'I have a man in my
of a door phlegmatic: 'I'm a first-class degen-

erat'
Madame: 'Superintendent. First, what a
pleasant?'
Tom: 'I want it will be'
Madame: 'I have something quite novel in
store for you this evening'
Tom: (sneaking): 'What?'
Corrigan: 'A cold lamp'
Madame: 'A chocolate cream?'
Tom: 'About time'
Madame: 'She's a sweet little waitress'
Tom: 'I'll split her in two'
Madame: 'No you won't'
Tom: 'I have a thing like a flower pot'
Madame: 'Don't I know that?'
Tom: 'She's not fat.'
Madame: 'Only in the correct country'
Ramp: 'pad and beam'
Tom: 'A good pad, you say?'
Madame: 'A stranger'
Tom: 'Where is this being?'
Madame: 'Room for room. She says you'
Tom: 'Good. A whisky, Corrigan on the
double'

Corrigan (sneak): 'One double for the
waitress. (Sneaking over) one waitress
on the double. Not as good as one-eyed
on the straight. or off on the turn'

Best (approaching Tom): 'How are you
this evening, Mansfield?'
Tom: 'Not bad. Tom'

Best: 'You'll be pleased to know that the
Brighton subdivision was most successful'
Tom: 'How much?'
Best: 'A lot'

Tom: (completing): 'How much?'
Best: 'How much? Oh, no, no, no, of course,
for you, Mr. Mansfield'

Tom: 'Charles-John'

Best: 'Twenty'
Tom: 'Thirty'
Best: 'Thirty'

Tom: 'Thirty. Or six'
Best: 'All right. Thirty'

Corrigan (approaching): 'Here's your
whisky, waitress—'

Tom: 'Let Corrigan viciously and send
him to the floor'

Tom: 'Get me another one, without the
tip'

Corrigan gets up and calls
Best: 'Well done, Mansfield. He's been
bugging for that'

Tom: 'Can't wait the Irish
Best: 'They're a dead loss'

Tom: 'Thank you tonight'
Best: 'It did have tonight'

Tom: 'Mansfield'

Corrigan (approaching): 'Here you are, Mr.
Tom (taking the drink). That's better'

Corrigan: 'Thank you, Mr.
Corrigan: 'wonders off. James Mans-
field enters

Mansfield: 'Are you drinking alcoholic liquor,
Mr. Superintendent?'
Tom: 'Sure'

Mansfield: 'Desert'
Tom: 'If you say so, Mr.
Mansfield'

Tom: 'Very well Corrigan'

Corrigan comes up. Tom: 'Across the
whisk in his face and hands has the
mug's glass'

Tom: 'Mansfield then'
Corrigan leaves with the glass

best makes to drive but run into Sir Phosphorus Sewer who is carried in on a litter. Some wheezing trouble in Sewer is immediately clear and carries a rule.

Sewer: Hold it right there, Bent, or I'll ride you with that!

Murdering power. Port, it stalks on the floor. Sewer laughs loudly. He is drunk. You're a drunk toward Bent.

Madame: Sir Phosphorus, you shouldn't! English is so

Sewer: A mare's ass, madame.

Madame: You're unconscious! Sewer.

Sewer: I am. Scotch in the scalp.

Madame: A disgrace!

Sewer: You're a bore and a crank, Madame.

Madame: Go away.

Madame: You'll regret this, Sewer. I'll have you reburied! Not only will depression be the death of you. I will. Struggle into the gutter. A lot and appearing weak. A goblet of sweetened meat!

He turns off.

Sewer: A flagon of manny. Can you?

Madame: Another! Madame prevents him from leaving.

Madame: Don't go, James. You have got to see our little and charming!

Madame: Entertainment?

Madame: A luxurious dance.

Madame: Luscious.

Madame: Yes, President is to reveal her propitius.

Madame: Pardon?

Madame: Theles.

Madame: I'll help.

Madame: Gentlemen! We now present for your delight and approval a head but sweet entertainment by none other than the delightful President!

Madame: President enters into colored light changes and steps in direct from the party.

Sewer: *After a while, raising his eyes:* I'll get her. I'll get that goddess in the past.

He flies and falls. President. Shrivels and slumps. Port rises and winks.

Tom: Order! Order, please.

Madame: What are we going to do?

Tom: A flicker's out, Sir Phosphorus.

Sewer: Is she dead?

Madame: *Shrivels.* Of course she is! What are we going to do?

Port: Who's dead? *Staggering around.*

Not my Lady. Lady.

Madame: *On Port:* It's President, Sir. Walkway one of my best girls. Worth a fortune to me.

Lady: Here I am, Walter! Safe and sound.

Sewer: I shall remember you, Madame. Handsomely.

covered up. Everyone out and long for Phosphorus, would we employ you to later to rescue the corpse?

Sewer: If you can.

He goes up with great difficulty assisted by Tom etc.

Madame: I was not here.

Bent: Me neither.

Sewer: Pardon?

Tom: Tell her so to the latter gentleman.

They put President on to the litter and bear her out. Murders and slumps. They all leave except Corrupt who during loud President breaths down and weeps.

Dead Syme: voice of the Age and fiery demoniac walks up and down deep in thought. Romay arrives, enters.

Romay: Eh, Mr Syme, I've sold all our copies already.

Syme: How did you get it done?

Romay: Up the drain-pipe, sir.

Syme: What a poor name!

Romay: Ronald Gallagher.

Syme: *Amazement!* Look?

Romay: Top right.

Syme: You know I don't tolerate Irish members of staff!

Romay: Why not? I sell more eggs than any supplier in Aquila Street.

Syme: There's the door, Ron. I'm busy.

Romay: The pay's poor.

Syme: *With a piece of paper in his hand reads:* From 1886 to 1890 Melbourne was forced to endure the wild extravagance and extravagance of the Gillian Deakin Government. Their abuse of power and

poor use was nothing less than prodigal. Existing in their minds Melbourne's most personal speculations, they presented wondrously as expansion public funds and reduce the Colony to economic rubble.

The methods employed were fiscal collapse, legislative incompetence and flagrant political dishonesty. Few members of this Parliament were innocent of stomach. Even Deakin that upright and holy radical, held directorial positions in highly specious companies.

It came as the first of storms when in 1890 Gillian and Deakin were ousted by James Munro, Melbourne's Premier and Chief.

The news of Munro's ignominious retreat in England, after fifteen months of inept government, could be greeted with a cheer were it not for the pitiful state of the colony where starvation, unemployment and disease are the order of the day.

Romay: *On the way:* Read all about it! Munro's ahead!

Tom: *Reads:* Get your copy of the Age. Munro's ahead!

A crowd gathers round Romay. They buy copies and chat volubly.

Tom: Thanks, Romay.

Tom: I should like to see Munro in his capacity as Premier of Victoria has appointed himself Agent-General in London. He has embarked for England in what might be termed anarchy house.

Madame: Munro's ahead!

Tom: Let's petition the Governor!

Tom: All such Government House!

All: Yes!

The crowd moves across to where the

Governor stands.

Tom: We demand an explanation!

Tom: 1. Munro must be brought back in immediately!

Tom: 2. Clapped in soon!

All: Yes!

Tom: Ladies and gentlemen, the Premier of Victoria, the Honorable James Munro, weighed down by the incumbent and certain banks of Government, has seen fit to take up a, at, higher appointment. It is, I feel, a species of vacuum far here. I wish him well.

Tom: 3. Vacation!

Tom: 4. We're all on vacation.

All: Yes!

We're all on vacation.

During our holiday pay.

On levels celebration.

Carry, order and read money.

Tom: Read all about it! Shook now.

Tom: *Reads:* It all as world-wide depression!

Crowd buy papers and read.

Tom: Shook was a great but really enough to protect the government from prosecution.

Tom: *On stage, shouts depression!* Even if all our banks are mortgage our ourselves, and our private residents had been a combination of the wisdom of Solomon and Selma, we could not have escaped a time of severe depression, a world-wide depression visited upon us by the Angels of *Alas!*

At the same time as Shook's speech, night song.

We're all on vacation. etc.

Tom: Read all about it! *Tom:* *Reads:* Our nation takes over the reins of Government!

Tom: *Reads:* Our nation takes over the reins of Government!

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Tom: *Reads:* Our nation takes over the reins of Government!

Paterson Well?

Man 1 (amused): All I want is a bloody job.

Paterson My advice to you, good man, is to start with all possible speed at our Labour Office, where you will find a full variety of lucrative positions at your disposal, one small one honest, eager, well-disposed, sympathetic (He shows a door in their face.)

Man 1 I did good. Nothing doing.

Man 2 I did too and got a job building the railway from Vancouver to Gordon. The pay was nine shillings a week. After paying for food and rent, I sent my wife home one shilling.

Scene The factories were not the only ones to suffer in the misadventure of securing The Government were quite skilled at it too. **Roscoe** Read all about it! Thousands near starvation in Melbourne. Ragged crowds walk the streets. Typhoid strikes. The unemployed march in Canton and Rock pool. Mounted police attack with batons. Cries to Prime addressing the masses: *Just law, and law, there cut — lay, the characters of law and order cut so that the duty will not appear here to be performed.*

Scene The winter of 1893 was the worst in Melbourne's history. It was left to relief organisations, mostly religious, to dole out hot soup, bread and then tea to long queues of cold and gaunt workers. Crowds from soup queues (Women and young girls, all out of work, joined the ranks of the dry a prostitute. Men and boys looked the streets and alleys in search of visible refuse. Bakers were found dead in gutters, in streets and floating down the Yarra. Melbourne was sick, sick to the very core (All of this can perhaps be viewed by the crowd in a composite effort.)

Roscoe Read all about it! *Martinez* in Melbourne!

Mr. Benson What a thin lady and! (She coughs.) What's her name? (She walks down to Mrs. Newman who is shaking a fire.) What are you having there?

Mrs. Newman Nothing, it's just some old rubbish.

Mrs. Barton (clucking the fire) Eh, what's that? (Paterson) Good, it's a — it was an infant. Burnt to death by Mrs. Newman, a deserted wife unable to feed her other three children.

Paterson (back on stage) The Government is doing everything in its power!

The crowd here gathered round Roscoe and here bought papers.

Valer 1 (sings): Baby-burn scandal!

Valer 2 (sings): Mrs. Knott, a baby-burner, murders several babies in her care and —

Valer 3 (sings) Pick the money.

Valer 4 So put them in a shaft-flag and drowned them like cats.

Scene

Judge (on stage) Mrs. Gertrude Knott, I hereby find you guilty of the wilful murder of seven infants and sentence you to death by hanging.

Roscoe Hangman refuses to hang Mrs. Knott!

Hangman I could never hang a woman. A

man, yes, but not a woman. It is against my principles.

Scene He got very drunk and died in three hours.

Valer 1 Don't hang Mrs. Knott!

Valer 2 Commence her sentence!

Valer 3 It's not her fault!

Valer 4 The Government created the conditions!

All (sings) Show mercy, show mercy! etc.

Paterson (sings) The Government is doing everything in its power!

The crowd watches as Roscoe the hanging of Mrs. Knott.

Scene In January 1894 Mrs. Knott was finally hanged by an eager crowd to the music.

Edith (sings) She watched for some minutes their blood and entrails ran down her flowing.

Paterson Any woman who roasts a child has forfeited her right to life. Any mother is an open for whom hanging is the kind a death. The working classes and liberals are crushed in resentment. The working classes have lost their spirit. They slaver and slave before Parliament in search of hand-outs. Their indignation and humanity is of great concern to the Government and others of the Church. Instead of fruitfully trying to improve their lot, they talk and talk in the streets. As Premier of this colony, I shall do everything in my power to see that law and order are rigorously maintained.

Scene (sings) The political depravity of this Premier has caused up revulsion and revulsion in the colonies!

Roscoe Paterson and Roscoe control! Turner new Premier!

Scene from the end of

Scene A belated victory for democracy. Port, First Fish and House fire just at present. Paterson dies in the stage.

Scene But it was too late. The drought had been done. The city was a cemetery, doomed to cholera, conservatism and Presbyterian activity.

Dumpler It was too late, all right. Park's last sentence was to close down my theatre on the ground of obscenity. Tomb, personally that the hole.

Edith I became a prostitute, and specialised in polygamy. I gave them all the joy.

Scene Melbourne's population plans moved to believe that all Sydney. Melbourne became a second city, a mere suburb on the fringe of Australia. Workers, writers, and painters and the middle-class left for Sydney, Tasmania and the West. The population just divided away.

Goodbye Melbourne Town song with dialogue as before. They leave at night.

Roscoe (Read all about it! Turner replaces apocryphal! Period of reconstruction!

Scene from the end of

Scene (sings) Hey, son, why arrest you at night?

Roscoe Have to sum me keep.

Scene (sings) That is no excuse. You're under arrest. Name please.

Roscoe Roscoe Gallagher.

Judge (on stage) Roscoe Gallagher, of no fixed abode, I find you guilty of various

work's confinement only to be released after fifteen months of the bench have been administered to your bare back. Blood put be drawn. Take him away.

Scene leaves hanging with the Goodbye Melbourne song.

BOER WAR MONGRELS

Boys and literature: scenes in play, singing, looking back. They are on their way.

Boys Roscoe's wife knows how to say goodbye.

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Miss Aust.
 I'm Australia, Miss Australia.
 Good, stand your rights on me.
 Increase my fame and spread my name.
 From sea to shining sea.
Breaker? Breaker Moran?
 Are you my one and only man?
Breaker (sings): Great death do us part,
 now and forever more, Amen.
Miss Aust. Breaker Moran, Breaker
 Moran, do you hear this Breaker Moran?
Breaker. I hear you, Miss Australia.
Miss Aust. You'll never let me go, won't
 you Breaker? You'll never let me down?
Breaker? No Ma'am.

Miss Aust. We'll make a good couple you
 and I. You — I mean Breaker Moran —
 will help make me — a humble unassuming
 Melbourne girl — Queen of the
 Pacific.

Breaker. Yes. Good show. What about
 Buggy, though?

Miss Aust. Buggy?

Breaker. My brother Buggy.

Miss Aust. He'll get by — don't you
 worry about him. But you — it's you I
 mentioned. Think big Breaker. Open up
 your heart. You are destined for greatness.
 Together we shall march across the pages
 of history. All the eyes of the world will
 turn our way. Remember that, Breaker
 Moran, your country is coming of age and
 you are helping me out into the society of
 nations.

Breaker. Allow me to be your intellectual
 companion. Miss Australia.

Miss Aust. Thank you, Breaker — I knew
 you were the man for me.

Splash. She trips out. *Narrator enters.*
Aud.

Narrator. And, with the latest splash,
 Miss Australia had vanquished. The surface
 of the Goodtime smothered itself over. A
 silence hung over the room and the band
 were Breaker and Buggy seated. But
 Breaker had been revealed by a dream of a
 glorious future.

Breaker sets up.
Breaker. By Jingo —
Narrator. Jingo. Jingo will save you
 though —
Breaker. By bloody Jingo —
Narrator. Jingo. Jingo, in Jingoism will
 you want to die.

Breaker. He bloody Jingo, Napper, if I
 haven't had one hell of a dream.

Buggy. Uh?

Breaker. He knows something?

Buggy. I'm lagged with.

Breaker. One day, the world's going to be
 looking at us I tell you — the Queen of the
 Pacific. We're going to show them a thing
 or two. Hey you? (To Narrator.) Which
 way to Melbourne? (Narrator points them
 off.) And Melbourne — a city and a hell.
 Parks Gardens. Tall churches. A night to
 inspire me. Napper — reverence. Well,
 a nice hairy it up or we'll never get there.
Naches on the Yarns.

They go.
Narrator. Melbourne's parks and gardens
 were picturesque enough at the time — but
 not quite in the way Breaker imagined
 them. As he and Buggy told their horses all
 towards Melbourne town, a character of a
 very different kind led an animal of a very
 different kind into the Treasury Gardens.

Alfred Shinar enters leading his camel.
(Music.)

Shinar (sings):

Shinar pon' lings.

This song I am singing,

Good fortune to me bringing.

Yon yon for my lings.

Pause.

Shinar (sings at the camel): Shinar
 hank!

(The camel ruts.)

Shinar (sings, the camel on the head):
 Another mungo mungo bawler bawler
 shaking. Jukins quonquid sh sh to
 gonggongah!

Pause. He pulls out a pomegranate from

his shoulder-bag and gives it to the camel.
Shinar (sings): gonggongah! Shinar
 bawler rns kumel, bawler bawler
 shaking.

He puts it on the head again. (Music.)
Music with bawler.

Hung-Hi. Good, velly nice camel, velly
 nice. You wince camel. Mier? (Shinar
 snorts.) Velly good camel. How much you
 want? He makes velly good place, shop,
 chop, makes velly nice sweet-and-sour
 pork, long soup, short soup, velly big. You
 tell me Hung-Hi? (Shinar shakes his head.)
 Good. Mier, velly big mungo, velly
 good place. You tell me? (Shinar shakes
 his head.) Me Hung-Hi, famous like
 Chinese cook. How you tell me, Mier?

Shinar. Ahmed Shinar.

Hung-Hi. Ahhh, Mier Shinar, velly good
 to meet you. (Hung-Hi bows. Ahmed snorts
 nervously.) Camel as good as Melbourne,
 Mier Shinar. Lured in. No glass, in-
 stead, cutlery, velly big place. (Shinar
 produces a pomegranate.) Ahhh
 pomegranate. I give you velly good place.
 (He produces a pomegranate from his
 pocket.) One shilling dozen.

Shinar. Suppose dozen.

Hung-Hi. Many dozen — velly cheap,

Mier Shinar.

Shinar. Seven penny dozen.

Hung-Hi. Light penny dozen — me velly

poor cook now.

Shinar. Light penny (He shrugs.) I have.

Hung-Hi. Ahhh, velly good, you velly

clever man.

Shinar. Three dozen.

Hung-Hi (hands Shinar the basket): Shinar
 give him the money in small change. They
 catch coins, then how to turn order and
 give in their position. Meanwhile Goo
 Nover and Gooey. (Shinar has returned, a
 dish of meat and clucking basket of meat.)
SLIDE. Once Nover a handsome. Nover
 Gooey. Nover an Aboriginal resident of
 Farrow.

Gooey. Joss, Doss, you're a regular
 tiger with the stamp-gang, a dinky-dy
 outside bull, ploughed me like I can't
 never been ploughed. *Aud.* (Shinar)
 the best stamp-gang I've had since the
 Moorooona. Mier, supper ahead for
 twenty-four hours. What a gang! Better
 than a pun mawwah.

Doss. You lady belongs me all now.

Gooey. Too right it does. As long as you're

keeping that up.

Doss. Me lady belongs you.

Gooey. Too reckon I'm caught?

Doss. Yarn, yarn.

She laughs.

Gooey (singing shrapnel): Hey, there's
 that Afghan and his camel, tried to do it
 over in the Treasury Gardens.

*They go up to Shinar and Hung-Hi who
 look out of the frame.*

Gooey (to Ahmed): Winkles, none,
 what?

Shinar. Ahmed Shinar.

Gooey. And you? Check it now?

Hung-Hi. Me no Chinese, Mier Boong.

We're all gone.



Mr Hwang-Hi, honorable Australian citizen, Miss MacCallista.

Gumey: Ought, ought. Mr Hi, I'm Gumey. Now, me friends call me Tucko-Lipo! (She cackles loudly with a proper, genuine, mouthy Aussie Patois accent.) Ought, you're an old stop-tougher. You're here to be Australian to get that one. Anyway, this is me Kanaka editor, Oona Nara. (She and Hwang-Hi bow.) Wouldn't fancy a swag of wine, Mr Shiraz?

Shiraz: Allah forbids it.

Gumey: Ah, come on, can't yer forget about yer blissus?

Shiraz: I must accept your hospitality, Allah bids it.

Gumey: Good on yer.

Shiraz drinks from Gumey's bottle.

Oona: You-tell, Hwang-Hi, drinkin' bottle belongs to?

Hwang-Hi bows and drinks from Oona's bottle. They drink and drink.

Hwang-Hi (after a while): Oona, velly good, smokin' real velly drink, but Hwang velly much, velly strong, me like you velly much.

Me want to drink Gumey.

Oona (amused): You-tell, go alongs this — lady belongs me-ah!

Hwang-Hi: Me velly sorry, Mister 'Welly drunk.

Gumey: Ooper like Australia, Shiraz?

Shiraz: No.

Gumey: Why not?

Shiraz: Bad country. Bad people. They hate me. Only want my card.

Gumey: Australia's alright mate. It's the Australians that suck.

Shiraz: They kill off your people.

Gumey: They haven't finished yet.

Oona: Big white Queensland born fellow ate four my brother's Storchs alongs with. Me run away at me dead-end too.

Shiraz (to Gumey): You must kill too.

Gumey: No, we ain't like that.

Shiraz: Very bad. You will all die.

Gumey: I know. (Pause.) They get a gook. Ah Hwang-Hi! (He is staggered around drunk and giggling.) His's shattered already. A one just screaming. Come on, Shiraz, drink up. (Shiraz drinks.) That's it! (To Hwang-Hi.) Come on, Ahmed-Eyes, how about a Celestial drink?

Hwang-Hi drinks in Chinese fashion to Oona.

Oona (after a while): Me-tell, how am I too? Me is open up and down in an Arabian style.

Gumey (after a while): Come on, Shiraz, drink in the Afghan manner!

Shiraz drinks in an Afghan style. Gumey just drinks and drinks in appropriate style. The music in a future companion of notes. The dance and music reach a frenzy, with the four dancers then taking arms and moving into a very sensual resolution of the below with theatrical married arrangements.

I love a southern country,

A land of sweeping plains, etc.

Breaker: Jaws!

Bugsy: Wingo!

Breaker: Stone the crowd and out you are!

Bugsy: Blow me over!

Breaker: What are we stopping out for? There's enough Bugs and there's Zugs here to have a bop's right now. Where'd youse all spring from, eh? Struck in through South Australia, did you? I tell you Nigger, the sooner they federate the country the better. Only way to keep these fellows out. Which of youse — if any — can speak the Queen's English as the mapoke?

Ah! We all do.

Breaker: One at a time!

Hwang-Hi: Me honorable Australian citizen. Lookin' here, me habes papers. Gumey, they Oona (I adore her!), he wants to see your credentials.

Breaker: Listen, Cadbury Crunch, I don't want a gook at his message gook, all I want to know is where do I volunteer?

Shiraz: Volunteer?

Bugsy: Tuck Volunteer. Look! Sign up.

Shiraz: Ah! In the English sentence. "A young man was out one day walking, as was his custom when, on turning the corner, he came face to face with standing on a signpost, an earnest young officer of the Crown saying the people present is volunteer for service in the far-flung corners of the Empire."

Bugsy: Exactly.

Breaker: Yeah. Haven't you heard there's a war on? What's the matter? Don't you blokes read the Town and Country Journal?

Shiraz: A war?

Oona: Me no fightin' white fellow's war.

Gumey: You read it, Oona. News/Guns.

Shiraz: A war. That's very bad news. My grand old bin in time as a ship of the desert carrying gun for the British in the Sudan. Me not like to be in captain of a ship of the desert carrying gun for the British in the Sudan. Will settle for the Wallabur Plains any old day. Allah be with you! (To crowd.) Shes shes help me (Goes).

Bugsy: Cowards! Foreign Shit!

Breaker: You see that? You throw open your doors — you treat them like your brother — you treat them just like that — and when the chips are down what happens?

Bugsy: They do the dirty on you.

Breaker: Yeah, they are, clean through. No light in the buggers.

A dirty sort of sugar like Necessity comes on with a tin — collecting for charity.

Necessity: Give now, here's your chance for generosity and help as to give a stone of Adam Lindsay Gordon. Here you are. To the memory of Adam Lindsay Gordon — Brighton's own — help as to erect a statue by public subscription.

Breaker: Agreed hereon.

Narrator: You said it. You wouldn't believe half the things he did!

Bugsy: Nice. He was a great heroism.

Narrator: Thank you, thank you.

Bugsy: Has got a stone in the top of the an — it jink through into the Narrator's hand. (Necessity pockets it moving off.)

Bugsy: Hey!

Narrator: By!

Breaker: Where does a man volunteer for the South African War?

Narrator: Never heard of a.

Bugsy: None of those down have been reading the Town and Country Journal, Breaker.

Breaker: I can see that for myself!

Narrator: Now, what do I volunteer at? Come it might cost you a lot. Now, I look on for a couple of quid I might just be able to squeeze you on to the boat, but like if not to likely. I've got some contacts. Come!

Breaker: Here's five. Can you do it?

Narrator: Follow me.

Exit Brighton. The howl of a dog. A half-pint pot of light. Mysteriously the door shuts.

Jaws: What'd you think that was, eh? The blood-curdling howl of a dog on the Boppy High Plains? Wrong again! The poem. The poem is the witch dog of democracy. Mr Narrator!

Jaws: Run up a road. Democracy is a dog — howling at the death — with a typewriter strapped to its back. It acts now on a stick.

Jaws: That's a good boy. Only hope we don't see any red herrings. You know what dogs are like with rabbits — the one's murder on the harrings. (Light has grown stronger. He goes.) (October 1899 — the Beer War begins. In the months that follow, the Boers invade Natal and the Cape Colony, stir up rebellion among British territory, and besiege the garrison towns of Mafeking, Kimberley. They rebuff all British attempts to defeat them — in fact, they threaten Britain in the field, and embolden her in the eyes of the world. A mighty imperial power frustrated by a handful of Boer farmers.)

Enter Miss Australia checking a photograph of Queen Victoria.

Miss Aust:

Oh never never never fear.

Queen Victoria, mother dear,

I hold your hearted brave Maids

And some few Eggers to land a hand

Oh help, help, somebody help! (She dashes down.)

Jaws: In the shoves of power some of the most intelligent and opportunists, who cling to their pet politicians like flies around a cow's asshole, saw a great chance of making political capital out of the war. They declared war conference.

Miss Aust (To maid): Oh, do something, do something. Ladyship has just been brought (She goes.) I do so hope she'll be all right.

A half comes from the under — they march.

Jaws: Finding a member of parliament is not such an easy task. It involves a thorough search of unscrupulous bars, brothels, nightclubs, theatres — even parliament itself. One enterprising group, though, managed to locate their man and arranged a meeting rally on the steps of parliament.

Some order hurdle in the MP. One appeals to crowd.

Asks: Calling all able-bodied young men — John Bull wants you! Do you seek adventure, fun and frolic in another clime, all these and duty too? Then you are the man for us.

Narrator: But Ed Buggy and Breaker in *The Chair* adopt a nervous-gaiter man — the soldier, once the M.P.'s partner.

Narrator: Hear that? That is the place. Come, you realising there's a good many people attempting to volunteer, don't you — the one, successful applicant will have to go — (Breaker pays him again.) You get what I mean. Good! I read say your generous pleasure means and

Bugger: When it comes to the war-effort, the people of Britannia know where their duty lies.

Breaker: Not only that! We'll get it all back.

Narrator: What? What? How?

Breaker: (Sings) *good Navigator!* You've shown this lot, you may as well stick a cut *Asks* *gives to Joanne*.

Asks: Poet? Got this important news release: "MP refuses to Britain's aid! Landed other opposition: Poet infers that such resistance to *Ordn's* Boats — asks that an Australian contingent be sent immediately. Poet is a man of action: Where others sit down and ponder, he takes the initiative." We expect to be reading that in this evening's paper.

Asks returns to MP: A crowd gathers. *Bugger and Breaker force Narrator to retreat.*

Joanne: Do they think the press, the watchdog of democracy, will be satisfied with these press statements? No. The press will assess the situation and make up its own mind. (Ed Barmington?)

The day grows: *MP addresses crowd.*

MP: *Invading from above* gave him by an *ask!* Britain is at war and we in the State of Victoria must prove man enough to do something about it! Agreed? We Va.ians must meet some resistance as men of action, not sit down and ponder. We must show these dappled Sydneysiders the way!

Crowd: Take right, etc. No gasp! *gasp!* *gasp!*

MP: Does this State bear the Queen's name for nothing?

Crowd: No. Melbourne should give the lead.

MP: And we going to show her and the rest of the Empire how much we deserve that appellation?

Crowd: Of course we are!

MP: People think we sit down at a desk. They think we haven't measured from the crumb of muck-toe and sandy toes. Let's show them differently. Let's show them by making the biggest, bestest and best-equipped fighting force to Britain's aid that any of the colonies can manage!

Crowd: Yab!

MP: This has with Britain are the acts of blood.

Joanne: Or will be anyway.

MP: She is fighting for her life!

Joanne: How can that be? For her life — against a few hundred poorly trained Boer farmers?

MP: We are bound to Britain as child is to its parents. Britain is a father and we are his sons. Britain is a mother and we are her daughters. To fight for Britain is to fight for yourself, for your very own family!

Joanne: Anyone with the slightest drop of correct blood in his veins oughtn't to see spit for Britain.

MP: Who — who is still ask you — what is it projects us from the threat of an Asian invasion? What sea power holds the Philippine, the Channel, the turbulent Bosphorus horde in check? We wouldn't last an hour were it not to sever her links with us.

Breaker: Hark right, he's bloody right! he is bad enough already? Asia's there. Wages enough in the country already, lowering the standard of living and putting white men out of a job. I tell you — I've just come from the Treasury Gardens and there's more Boongs there than parrots!

Crowd: Yab!

MP: All the more reason to strengthen the bonds between Britain and ourselves, not weaken them by ignoring her call for help. It has been a dark week for Britain — a darker time lies ahead. But think what perpetual night will fall across the land of ours if the Empire crumbles around our ears. Civilization will be set back centuries. The land of liberty and light will be no more. The ships await you —

Narrator: I don't want to go, I don't want to go —

MP: To refuse is the act of a traitor.

Crowd: Shut that traitor up, or else we will.



They discover the skeleton. He questions slowly. Reggie has rushed forward.
Reggie: Don't let it happen, don't let the Empire fall to dust and ashes and ruin. I speak to you as an Anglo-Australian — because that's how I talk for "I'm a Port".

Reggie: Britain is in mortal danger. Stand by her in her hour of need. I beg you. All colonial peoples should rush to her aid.
Joanna: Are you going to?

Reggie: Me? We want to win, don't we?
Joanna: Wouldn't you know it? First to sign us on, then let us go — the life-sized British mannequin!

Nigel: (looking at the platform) Not so. If you know, Reggie, you'd understand that only with him live in Australia can the war in South Africa be won. But, as for an Anglo-Saxon being a race of soldiers not doing, what someone? Who was it behind this country in the first place? People in Anglo-Saxon stock. Everyone here now — if you want to trace your line of descent, where would you end up? Back home in the Old Country? Because I'm not a man to be sentimental. I'm not a man to beggar myself before you. I say simply the Mother Country is in trouble, she needs your help. I say simply we're in Australia, not England, that was in the right spot to be a man the British population would run to your support, mine, his and dog, back, sack and barrel. Let us take arms across the oceans, just back across the seas.

MP: Hear hear!

Crowd: Ya!

Joanna: A pretty speech from an immigrant just about wrapped it up.

MP: Who, then, is for us, who will volunteer to go to Britain?

Crowd: We will.

MP: Those not far as are against us — clearly.

Crowd: The bloodless.

MP: If you can't make up your mind, remember this, you'll get five back a day for your trouble!

Crowd: Ah!

MP: And since the exchange rate is favourable, in Africa that'll buy you five lots worth of goods!

Joanna: War's a good business, isn't it? I always had my pick. But what's keeping the hell for this one? We Australians talk about sacrifice, but what does it mean? Britain herself is paying our men that five jobs a day. What are we contributing? Nothing. Are we out of pocket? Course not. What do we lose? A few fellows who should've known better. Aren't through?

MP: Speak. It may be right. But it's long journalism.

Narrator: I don't want to go, I don't want to go.

MP: Is that a threat I have hurling for his life — a coward?

Narrator: Coward? He? What about you? What are you doing?

MP: I'm saying here and —

Narrator: You hear that? Safe and sound.
MP: But, as for the war itself, I'm off. I'm a coward, I'm a coward. I've put my status aside at His Majesty's disposal.

Crowd: Hush! Will you. You see

MP: (aside) This can't be right. Who authorized that?

Joanna: We haven't actually done that — we've only said we have.

Another side: If pushed, we'll say we meant the middle buildings!

MP: Well, don't talk! (To crowd) All right then, the way, hurry up, no shuffling.

You Get Five Back a Day song. The crowd sings up.

MP: Oh, if only I had my time over — if only I were thirty years younger and the great flesh I carried my bones, if only I weren't constrained by my doctors to do nothing more dangerous than a float, with a spill now and then on the high backed commode. Oh, by God I'd give my right arm to be them with you — side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, back to back, and end to end, we'd take to meet our glorious destiny. As it is I promise you that all year month — spiritual or material — shall be taken care of. With your bodies go our prayers!

Minor song. A few volunteers.

MP: Next of kin?

Soldier: My wife.

MP: How old?

Soldier: Twenty.

MP: How old?

Soldier: You and pretty as a picture.

MP: Just so long as she's more than a picture — all right, off with you. Did you get the address?

Alto: Yes.

MP: Then what are we waiting for?

They start. Soldiers have material off.

Joanna: (with a gesture of disgust and being of this, what did I — the hard-boiled journalist — the watchdog of democracy — the truth-teller — what did I publish?)

"All good men should answer to me here and order supplies. Pack loads to Britain's aid. There can be no doubt that an Australian campaign should begin to crush the Boers. Port, the man of action, shows us the way."

"Worse still, I published Higgs when he attacked the wisdom and morality of the war in Parliament."

We hear Higgs appears in body of the audience.

Higgs: I don't care what the press does to my reputation — this war is my conscience, a travesty of justice. I must see.

He appears and goes. Higgs.

MP: Take a hint, Higgs.

MP: You've backed a loser.

Higgs: I have a mandate. When before the directors of North Melbourne last February, I was asked whether or not I would support a proposal to send a second contingent to South Africa. I said no, and was returned by a majority larger than any other Member of this House.

MP: There were other issues.

Higgs: None so important.

MP: A. Who did you go and fight for the Boers you said?

Higgs: Because there is more to be done here unfortunately, in the very House. The Boer War is a campaign of attrition conducted in inveterate and brazenly against farms, women and children. Our only reason for supporting such a step is

that it is Britain, and we follow like sheep, or rather, men.

MP: If we might request Britain's protection in the future.

Higgs: Is this the price we have to pay — if that was true anyway? Britain is cynical and freely bargains with our potential enemies. She might not come rushing to our aid as eagerly as we rush to hers. Regardless of all this, the immorality and frankly apparent nature of this war requires that we oppose it. The Boers after all only seek freedom, and the right to run their own country in their own way. I only regret that the atmosphere of this country is so hysterical, prejudicial and rigid that I will have long passed on before it will be conceded that I, possibly, was right.

They laugh and howl him down. Transformation. The MP becomes part of the Australian contingent in South Africa. They cheer a slogan.

Soldiers: Free Breaker, free Breaker.

A General orders to run the court martial. Breaker is brought in by another British Officer. Cheers.

General: Her Majesty's Imperial Army versus Breaker Moran. Would the accused step forward?

Soldiers: Free Breaker, free Breaker.

General: Who is that second man?

Officer: Members of the Australian contingent, Mr. Moran is a great hero among them. Single-handed, he rescued five Boer gun-servicemen, at Spion Kop.

General: I don't care what his name or how popular he is with these yokels. (Looks forward, absent.) Silence in the name of Her Majesty! (Lower.) I warn you. More than all the names will claim heavily against the accused.

Boyer: Still? We're making it tougher for Breaker.

General: (to Officer) The damned political climate has swung against us at home. Horror and outrage over the women and children we've detained in refugee camps and those killed with the burning of farms.

Those responsible must be brought to trial. Breaker Moran, do you plead guilty or not guilty to the charge of slandering Boer cattle in the Transvaal's Middel River area?

Breaker: Guilty.

General: Did you or did you not set fire to farms with their women and children on that same day, the twelfth of December?

Breaker: I did. But under orders.

General: Such is the point!

Boyer: Kitchener ordered a General, would you know the court? And take your associates.

Officer: (with a sniff) Come on, lad, say you go.

Boyer and soldiers reluctantly leave.

Officer: (to General) He was really acting under orders, sir.

General: I know that.

Officer: You are condemning scapegoats, not real criminals.

General: Politics, politics, Captain. I'm a man given Breaker Moran. You are sentenced to death. Execution to be immediate.

The Officer kneels to Breaker. The General becomes the leader of the firing.

equal (formerly the soldiers) which now occurs

Bugby (crying breakdown): Oh no! The bandstand has collapsed on

General! All right now, attention! (They do so) Front rank!

Bugby: I can't do it!

General: Have you anything to say, Martin? Speak now as General holds your pose

Bugby: Australia will be proud of you General! Remember, kids, for the poem, and you between the eyeballs

Bugby: I was a shot. I'm his brother

General: I don't care who you are, son. You are now under the command of the British Army. First challenge a day. It's an order and your duty! (Pause) Your brother was excellent at carrying out, as a captain, orders. Imagine how he feels, his own brother a clerk

Bugby: I can't

General: You will (He throws out a revolver and walks to behind Bugby) I have this revolver aimed at the back of your skull, Private, and if you're a tin is not pointed at Martin's forehead when you fire, I shall shoot you for insubordination (Pause) Take aim! (Pause) Fire!

They fire. Bugby falls. The General walks up to the body and fires a shot into the head

General: Well done! Martin, after a round of rain, you will be in charge of grave duty. Quick march!

They march off

HOME SWEET HOME SCENE

Dad and Mom appear with table. Norman gets up and moves to it and then

Dad (at end of scene as before same mood): A lot of things have happened while you've been away, son. Did you hear the result of the recent referendum? We're going to have Federation soon. I voted for it. That young Dinkum — you know, Mum, he used to live round the corner of George Street — well he's already off to England. A Packer lad in London talking to the Queen? What do you think of that, Norman?

Norman: Where's the apple-pie, Mum?

Dad: You should go into politics, son. With a record like that — medals — you're the gift of the gods, a good head on your shoulders. Melbourne's going to send a lot of new politicians, Norman

Mum: Australia's new

Mum: And, Malikang has been relieved!

Dad: Did you hear that, Norman? Malikang has been relieved

Mum: And, (crying around) Malikang has been relieved! God save the Queen!

Dad: Our Melbourne boys did that. (To the audience)

Mum: And, Malikang has been relieved! Hip, hip hooray!

People appear from all directions, a jubilation street scene takes place, with shouts, handshakes, hugs and tears

Old ladies, workers, officer-workers, soldiers, air. Mrs Australia disappears. The crowd eventually breaks into Rule Britannia

The Ghost of Peter Lalor appears on stage. Lalor (shouting) Ladies and gentlemen! Silence please!

Peace

Chorus (loudly whispering) Give us Peter Lalor's

Ladies, Ladies and gentlemen, I have further good news from London. The House of Commons, that Cromwell built, has just passed the Commonwealth Bill (Chorus from the crowd) It only remains for the Queen, God bless her, to make it law, to sign the approval, and we will have Federation! (Chorus) One day we might slash completely the wrong of England and become a republic. Federation, however, will do for the moment, and with that in mind, people of Melbourne, the salt of Australia, I give to you — Mrs Australia!

Mrs Australia appears on stage holding spread out in front of her the Australian flag

Lady: And the Australian flag! (Loud cheer) Thank you, Ladies, please, ladies and gentlemen. Allow me to explain the flag and its motifs. In the top left-hand corner, we have a Union Jack in square (Chorus) Whose red stands for blood, blue for loyalty and white for hypocrisy! (Chorus as if in a noisy throng) Ladies of the Empire! To the right we have the emblem of the Southern Cross! (Chorus) Thank you. My own intention. They represent as you might have guessed, the six states of Australia. These six states are (pointing to the top star) MATERIALISM

Science and well-earned cheer

(pointing to the next) PHILISTINISM

Chorus

(next) INTOLERANCE Our love of the unusual

Chorus

(next) MILITARISM

Chorus

(next) RACISM

Chorus

(the lower one) And last but not least, supporting all the others — PARANOID! Touchdown cheer. The crowd makes the stage and beats blue Australia aloft. They carry her down to the main acting area in a procession and circle round. Mrs Australia sings

God Save the Queen one half of the crowd sing. I Love a Sunburnt Country. The other renders William Macleod. Lady will on stage recite Laurence poem. Eureka. The orchestra plays its part with the Melbourne Melbourne cheer. They eventually march off. Lady disappears. Mrs Australia Melbourne then continues for a while. Minister Packer appears on the platform

Packer: Once again, ladies and gentlemen, it is Minister Packer, your Minister of Communications. Some twelve years ago, I was with you in these very Exhibition Buildings, when we celebrated a land-

mark in Melbourne's history. Today it is just such another landmark in Melbourne's history. Today it is just such another landmark, even greater, if possible, than that of the Centenary of Federation. Those twelve years, ladies and gentlemen, have been rich in history, much of it not at all flattering to Melbourne and its citizens. The role of fortune has, however, once again turned in our favour. As you all know, the Commonwealth of Australia was formally inaugurated on the first of January in this year of grace 1901. It was then decided that Melbourne become the seat of Government of the Commonwealth of Australia

This was an apt and necessary choice. Melbourne has always been the centre of the Federation cause, and she is the only city in Australia with a Parliament. How large enough to contain the huge Commonwealth Parliament. The Exhibition Buildings were the only possible choice for this ceremony today and the vast crowd of 15 000 people!

Today, ladies and gentlemen, we are to witness the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament. For Melbourne, the capital of Australia, this is a moment of unparalleled achievement. The vision of our forefathers has been realized, our vision of the future is fulfilled. Melbourne, the centre of a Pacific power. Ladies and gentlemen, yes, I can see them, dear Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York are approaching, yes, here they are

A display of trumpets. The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York enter. They are followed by the Governor-General of Australia Lord Hopetoun, and Lady Hopetoun. They come following them are Mr Edmund Barton, the Prime Minister of Australia and his wife, Mrs Sir John, the Attorney-General and his wife, Mrs Sir George Packer, the Treasurer and his wife, Mrs Sir William Park, Minister for Customs and Excise, and Lady Park. They all go up to the stage

Packer: The Old Hundredth Psalm, ladies and gentlemen

The psalm is sung

Packer: His Royal Highness, as representative of King Edward the Seventh, will now read the King's message and proceed to adjourn the debate to the representatives of Commonwealth Parliament. He will then declare the Parliament open. His Royal Highness!

Duke: His Majesty has been pleased to consent to this separation, moved by his sense of the loyalty and devotion which prompted the generous and afforded by all colonies in the South African War, and the splendid history of the colonial troops. It is His Majesty's earnest prayer that this Union, so happily achieved, may, under God's blessing, prove an instrument for still further promoting the welfare and advancement of his subjects in Australia and for the strengthening and consolidation of his empire. (Pause and cheer) I now declare this Parliament to be open

Psalm and cheer

"Marvellous Melbourne" song



A strangely pessimistic assortment of desperate material

THE RADIO-ACTIVE HORROR SHOW

GARRIE HUTCHINSON

The Radio-Active Horror Show by John Roselli. Australian Performing Group. From Factory, Carlton, Victoria. Opened 7 July 1977. Directed, and Performed With: Wilfred Lutz, Margaret Nash, Kerry Dwyer, Ursula Harcourt, Richard Marpleth.

The wheel turns. Optimists and pessimists take turns in charge of the western world's personality. Sometimes everything seems to be going well and the future stretches boundless in front of us, mankind totally capable of dealing with any small technical problem that might crop up. The twentieth century, for instance. The sea set on happy Victorians conquering disease, firestorms and epidemics. Wars were small, relatively efficient and useful in spreading bible and soap. Everything got faster and more confident.

Sometimes the end of the world is at hand. Plagues, entry off the healthy, life is nasty, brutal and short. Murder and rape, sucking, and leaving, torture and death. The Middle Ages. The twentieth century.

Nowadays things have gone sour. At no time for 100 years has there not been a war somewhere. The rich get richer, the poor starve. Science, instead of benignly providing more and more answers has instead opened up more and more questions. The solutions we apparently have do not make very many people happy. The cities, supposedly the concentrate of civilization, are dying. The countryside is poisoned. And for thirty years the shadow of total annihilation has fallen upon us.

Previously millenarian fantasies, whether of the end of the world or the coming of the New Jerusalem at a combination of both have generally been based on religion. Mankind would have very little to do with it, except to be scared out on Judgment Day.

Now, the millenium will arrive as a direct result of our own efforts. It doesn't matter which particular mode you choose: starvation, ecologicalism, the bomb, a bout of nuclear war, or perhaps the return of disease, these are self-inflicted punish-



ments. The doubly metaphor is the image of the century.

So they say.

Science fiction writers have had a stronghold on writing about the end of the world lately, science fiction gives them enough freedom to get off on 'the theme' in a hard mode to use in this fashion, always looking towards the here and now rather than the hereafter. But where the here and now is the imminent political threat of disaster then work can proceed. On the streets, and on the theatre. The pessimism can happen through concrete appraisal of their views.

Thus the Radio-Active Horror Show at the Prost Factory, directed by the cast and John Roselli.

The Australian Performing Group is in a good position to do something in this direction — some would say that politically oriented, group developed community based theatre is what they should be doing all the time — because the group has been heavily involved with contemporary politics since the beginning. Of the notes that at Not only the issues but also in emphasizing an love personal democracy might work. (I've also thought that a show might be developed around the meetings that take up so much of the APG's time. Perhaps the public should just be invited to a night's argument about life, politics and art.)

Roselli, too, through his commitment to the 'theatre of the moment' and his justifiable opposition to the idea of monumental or masterpiece theatre brings his average post-nuclear desperation to bear.

The Radio-Active Horror Show is fortunately most akin to Roselli's *Golden Holocaust*, that angry black piece getting nihilismists, liberals and Austrians's own our that, and this show, are collec-

tions of sketches, scenes and songs around their subject.

Which is Uranium and what to do with it, the bomb and what it will do to us, and a cast of characters and what they want to do. The show is not a linear exposition of a political line, but an off centre series of features and facts around the subject.

Thus we have an Actress (Ursula Harcourt) who speaks about the 'nuclear winter' dying to get out and kill, start a civil war between her economic comrades and the burg and miners, the scientists, scientists. Here is the ancient toasts that if they're gonna get out, I've gotta try and get them first. Cheers.

Of course we have a representative of Late American Capitalism, The Fuser (Wilfred Lutz). He's from Indonesia, and has been ordered by someone to fix Australia. He loves Uranium, War Games and as long as he's having a good time doesn't give a hoot for the natives.

There's a Scientist (Richard Marpleth) drawn away by the implications of what he's done — but what can he do about it now? He'll surely go down with the same ship we're on.

An Operator (Margot Nash) in a few episodes from The Nuclear Days of our Nuclear Lives regards most things as so. Don't Lenny, and selection in new books and reliability.

And a Parent (Kerry Dwyer) teaching her child the facts of life, like the half life of plutonium and how her children's children's children won't see the end of it.

For the already converted the evening is highly entertaining and energetic, with sufficient points of view, and even humour, to sustain now that it runs two hours or so and not four. For the uninitiated I would guess the whole thing would be mysterious and even offensive, and the director's sketches that don't work don't bother.

For myself I found the Terrorist business mildly repugnant and one item with the Scientist is a psychoanalytic heaven just about unwatchable. The Nuclear Days of our Nuclear Lives sequences, with a nuclear cap, the optional and her love are sensitive to a degree. What they are really about I don't really know.

However the poem about scientific responsibility — The Mind Scientist Is Mad With Us — is genuinely moving, and Kerry Dwyer's poem to a Nuclear Landscapist, and teaching her child are terribly racist and effective.

All in all The Radio-Active Horror Show is a strangely pessimistic assessment of desperate material which works at less than the capacity of the actors and writer.

A production that stays on the knife edge

ASHES

ROBERT PAGE

Asks by David Rudkin. Melbourne Theatre Company, 41 St. Martin's Theatre, Brisbane. Mark Rudge, director. Steven Nader, Colin, Steve Myers, Anne, Lynne Curran, the Doctor, Sociologist, Nurse, Psychiatrist, surgeon/ambulance driver (first Adoptions Office, Jan Fildes, second Adoptions Office, Jan Fildes).

In a world beset by over-population and concerned for the quality of life many couples choose not to procreate, but take away the possibility of illness or the riskier, the common in the centre of David Rudkin's *Ashes* and humans will go to desperate lengths. Inevitably methods of contraception, fertility, rubbers, medications, abortions, vasectomies and the pill have never been so many nor so sophisticated, yet the incapacity to conceive is a problem like cancer and like cancer could for which no satisfactory remedy has been found.

But unlike the cold, which goes away, or cancer, which kills or is cured, not occurring is chronic — it just goes in, not happening. Like Tom Stoppard's *Verities* and *Travels* and *Guidelines* are *Ashes* where one goes on and on making a disappointment. Anne and Colin, the couple in Rudkin's play, have reached the stage where the heavy contamination of the non-event begins them on the harrowing trail from speculation to speech. Their desperation increases with the conflicting, expensive and unqualified advice they receive — seems dog-eating positions (mechanically demonstrated by a nurse with surgical model), odd bathing of insects (forcibly married, broken beneath, ditches, sperm and oviducts seen) — but although finally devoted with nothing continues to happen for them with momentous marriage regulation.

There it does. Raising strains of Mather "Vera, vera, Creative Spiritus". A child is conceived and for a brief time life looks as uncertainty, suspicion and jealousy — the young adoption of girl is one then the other is over. They can feel their heritage fluttering in the womb beneath their fingers, but this brief hesitation in their childless yearnings comes to a slow painful end as Anne at three months starts to menstruate and finally miscarries, not one child but — with future cry — from. And they mourn her womb.

The chance of producing their own child now slowly goes they begin as the adoption trail. Light up. Audience watches rule from observer/typewriter to hospital adoptions as the agency officials all but coldly discuss the possibility. Colin

and Anne are considered unreliable, the thought of playing "Mummy and Daddy" must be laughed later. Just as previously they had been forced by failure to escape their lives around touching and domesticity from their careers in science and waste, so now the phrases of their forms of creativity must rise from their ashes.

Colin goes over to Ireland for the funeral of his uncle, should be a touch outrage. His monologue, too long and too late in the play, intervenes this theme of regeneration in their lives — of the farthing quality of ashes.

The only answer, for the *Ashes* situation depresses him of his own heritage, isolated from the past, by the move to England he is isolated from the future by barrenness.

The optimism is tentative. Anne in her final speech describes her apocalyptic dream where the child of us tells her "take off your dead". The word from the agency comes. The prolonged non-appearance of their child is at an end, they must start to look for "whatever it".

Identify the central metaphor seeks everything with meaning — from the human egg to IRA, blood and death with the bible, Mahler and Eyre, as the way it's shown-off power in sometimes over-word but rarely.

Steven Nader's set has similar obliquity. A flexible background to the trauma, brilliantly combines sterile hospital and modern bedroom. The easy intimacy of the bed of home becomes the cold slab of intimate examination, an ambulance too, and a platform for the adoption officer's chilly sermon.

The language ranging from pithy aphorism to lyrical flight requires a production that stays on the knife edge between romanticism and the cold and

cheerful.

Mark Rudge and his cast of four held the production with utmost delicacy. Lyn Curran and Steve Myers portrayed two individuals whose affection and closeness only momentarily frayed with the tedious tension that pervades their lives. Though more of their speech is directed to the audience than to each other the sense of the strength of their relationship is never lost. Even individually, when Anne chats to the adoption officer, with a frankness that is only denting of their cause, as their liberal attitude to Colin's barrenness, how she doesn't always like him, and doesn't always fancy him.

Such honesty shows the strength of their relationship to us that its "blame" to the officer, the speech is a master work of tragic irony.

Myer's shambling Colin, quiet, sensitive and with a way touch that didn't even reach for laughs at the start kept the increasingly bleak mood deftly in check. The perfect foil for the more animated — yet less sensitive acceptance — of Lyn Curran's Anne.

Jan Fildes and Jan Fildes played their range of character, or rather caricature, parts — doctors, nurses, socialists, even, even their neighbours — with a fine versatility Rudkin could perhaps have restrained himself from the often-easy send-up of the medical profession and social services.

Tragedy is concerned with the aggression of fate, with lack of choice, and in the end demands finality. That the couple can't have their own children to tragic that they can't adopt is a social problem. "What happens to us in the world here is not necessarily to morality". The final group of actresses gives a poignant dignity that raises even from the animal mechanics he is the subject of as so much of the play. While there's life there's hope.





Shakespeare and G & S in successful 'pro-am' productions

HMS PENAFORTE
AS YOU LIKE IT

MARGOT LUKE

H.M.S. Penaforte by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. Gilbert and Sullivan Society of W.A. Opened 28 July, 1977. Director, John Wilson, design, Graham Miskin.

The R. Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., Robert van Marckensberg, Captain Concoran, Barry Preece, Tom Tucker, Roland MacAllister, Ralph Rockliffe, Bruce Markensberg, Dick Denstone, Desmond Luker, Bill Hootby, John Mahon, Bob Beckin, Robert Miller, Josephine, Terry Johnson, Helen, Kate Holmes, Lynn Hollaway, Jane Watson.

As You Like It by William Shakespeare. Directed and designed by Raymond Gosselin, produced by Bill Wilson. Opened 29 July, 1977. Director, Alan Fletcher. Actors, Michael van Stuenkel, James Dean, Charles, Neil Coffey, Raymond, Wendy Davidson, Colin Nicholson, Nathan, Davidstone, Keith Robinson, Leona, Gay Davidson, Duke Frederick, Chris Worthington, Duke Senior, Bill Davidson & Lind Ward, Zappanti, Lorna, Julia Elliott, Sylvia, Gerald Hiltner, Lord, Henry, Ben and Gerry, James, Karl Swisher, Audrey, Michael Lucas, Sir Oliver Mowbray, David Zappanti, Philip, Jane Rockliffe, William, Vladimir Markand, A. Mowbray, Michael Hughes, James de Bore, Paul Worthington.

Every now and then the amateur-versus-professional argument crops up. Last year the emphasis was on broad-band-baiter versus an over-qualified professional, and a first-rate actor who happened to combine two jobs successfully less of a professional because he did not depend on his earnings from the stage? Did his previous involvement the professional status of his colleagues?

This year the ratio is reversed. Does the intrusion of one or two professionals on the province of amateurs invalidate their status? Nobody, so far, has raised any objections. In fact, of course the part played by the specialist non-professional organisations is overdue for appreciation. They can, and do, mount productions that are lavish in manpower and audacious in experiment in a way the severely budgeted professional theatre cannot afford, thus extending the stage and appeal of presentation available to the theatregoer.

During August, Perth saw two notable examples of this kind: the staging by the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.



As by the University Dramatic Society. Both of these were directed by distinguished professionals — both of them introduced some professional elements among the actors.

The opportunity for innovation when dealing with Gilbert and Sullivan is, of course, restricted. Tradition is sacrosanct, but even within the accepted framework John Wilson finds ample scope for personal freedom. His specialty in dealing with a chorus is to create individual characters among them and so introduce among them a bit of business that lives on the scene without diverting too much of the audience's attention from the principals. Thus, not only are the sailors carefully differentiated, but the more serious, romantic and comic parts are temperamentally according to estimates of more delicate and more aggressive shades of pink and are graduated in age, with one strong relation rolling on as a schoolcar.

One's feelings about Robert van Marckensberg, the sought actor brought in from the outside, are ambivalent. His extravagantly doddering Admiral Sir Joseph Porter (older of the Queen's Navy), is certainly an original but he is a caricature in an alien mode — nineteenth century rather than G and S. In a different way Desmond Luker's professor Dick Denstone is refreshingly uncommon and un-theatrical, but rather pinned twentieth century as Saviour. Both of them seem to break the rule of light-hearted incongruity imposed by the music, which means that as matter

what kinds of realism enshrined at in the libretto, everybody is playing games and the smoothly accomplished stopping and dancing process that it is a really very jolly.

So, despite the appeal of novelty, the strength and enjoyment is still in the traditional virtues of G and S: the dedicated chorus knowing its job, the sparkle and absurdity of noble sentiments affectionately parodied, the bright-eyed songs by Graham Miskin giving a potent visual equivalent of the spirit of the piece. Finally, Barry Preece as Captain Concoran is the most generous sight for the occasion, and Terry Johnson, who has a most attractive voice and personality makes a charming breeze.

As a certain bonus, added by sleight of hand, there is a little-known Gilbertian conceit, R.S.V.P. or Monsieur Choufleur's Menuette, intended no doubt to force audiences out of any lazy habit.

The revival of interest in the Savoy Operas shows a groundswell of public need — a trademark of unaccompanied enthusiasm, which clearly needs to be kept fresh by innovative touches to keep it from becoming.

Ray Gosselin, in his capacity as Director at Huddersfield at the University of W.A., has a much finer hand in innovative productions of Shakespeare as the rule rather than the exception, and he has found ingeniously multifarious ways of making *As You Like It* relevant to his student actors and predominantly young audience. By employing a pattern of contemporary subtextual he achieves a compromise between the twentieth century and nineteenth that is on the whole successful and allows flexibility in accommodating the considerable range of ability in the group. The production grew out of a season of workshop training in which the actors were encouraged to "let themselves go in a fairly disciplined way". This has clearly paid off: there is very little of the Victorian memorised recital tone, and a great deal of lively, free-wheeling display of talent.

Orlando the hero, played by Alan Fletcher, is impressively the representative of today's generation — energetic, sensitive and dressed in slung denim. (He has recently played a number of parts with the Hob in the 'Wall Company' and is emerging as an actor to watch.) The warring duke and his followers are clearly fascist, using torture and offering incentives with sinister overtones, while the banished duke's merry band are carousing in the forest, dressed in ethnic gear, playing guitar and other and consuming quantities of fruit. Bill Davidson,

as their dual leader wears a permanent smile of bliss, which leads one to assume they are meant to be stayed as well.

The girls start off in Indian school clothes (1930s but, once they are in the liberating forest, Rosalind (Wanda Davis) dons guerrilla fighters' jungle garb and Celia (Joanne) had her innocent charmingly innocent as Rosalind's cousin. In this respect the film succeeds, because no responsible costar has been found for them as the restage — Silver and Piche, almost comic, and Audrey neither rolling nor sexual either, though both are listed as Tinseltown, surely left unconsciously downbeat, is played by Keith Robinson with a rare sense of timing and discipline, whereas David Kempner's wear is turned into a mild television caricature of an Irish priest with a hapless. Currently, the only consciously early seventeenth century touch, the androgynous Musgrave, representing Hymen, seems to jar in all this comedy.

The single most arresting study is Karl Zwexky's Rupert, whose natural clothes are held together with tatters, who opens half a pair of sunglasses and cherishes a delicate symbol. This sensitive detail dominates the stage whether he gives way to his bitterly witty melancholy or stumbles about in slapstick mimicry. Once over surely state whether so condemn him far as blatantly stating the show or whether to be lost in admiration.

When ensemble playing is seriously attempted it works impressively well, notably in the scenes involving Rosalind, Celia, Orlando and Touchstone. Here the actors achieve more than the sheer absorption of the verbal battle, but also manage to deal with all the nuances of the second game, creating from Rosalind's masculine disguise.

The understated set of houses and strong is a muted blessing. As their last the stage, dappled with green light, suggest sunlight through forest leaves, in worst, especially when raised or lowered, the houses backdrop creates like a gigantic house at work.

The instrumental accompaniment of guitar and oboe works well, though for some reason the songs struck out as less successful, neither Shakespeare nor contemporary.

A fine balance between the frenetic comedy and the undertones of seriousness

MARTELLI TOWERS

CLIFF GILLAM

Martelli Towers by Alexander Rose, National Theatre Company, Hale at the Wall Theatre Park, Windsor, Australia. Opened 27 July 1977

Director, Anne Byrne. Designer, Sue Russell. Stage Manager, Christine Randall. Performers, Anne, Pyper Williamson, Edward Martello, Peter Adair, Louise Randall, Peter Kenner, Jennifer Mendel, John Lewis, David McElroy, Alan Piper, Ian Rice, Andrew King, Murray Bruce, Margaret Fletcher, Anthony Martello, Alan Cassell, Sybil Green, Mike Morris, Geoff Giller.

Alex Rose's National Theatre Company in the Playhouse has been having, cautiously speaking, a lean time of it for 1977. The failure of the first production of the year, Molier's *The Miser* during the Perth Festival is failure partly the consequence of the over-appearance of imported English lead John La Murrant on the pattern for a string of productions which, even if commercially successful, (due to money publicly won) have been accused in a decidedly late-war fashion by the critical establishment.

The recent move by the company to the Hale at the Wall theatre for a four week season of Alex Rose's *Martelli Towers* seems to have broken the spell. The production should surely be the critics, and should certainly also do good business at the box office. It is difficult to know just why this particular production, unlike recent National Theatre efforts, should have achieved the coherence and lively energy it has since the play itself is, as a play, no better than others which have formed part of the National Theatre programme this year.

Certainly it is a well made play, from the point of view of economy of means and Rose's own interest for the well-placed comic line, but the somewhat pretentious claims that have been made for it, on the basis that it represents a "significant" dramatic treatment of the "ethnic minorities problem" do not seem to me to ring any joyous. What the play does demonstrate is the way in which a writer whose plays have been taken up for commercial production is able to develop a confident assurance and a positive sense of theatrical effect. He learns to pace his effects, and how to prepare an audience to receive those effects.

One fine example among many others in *Martelli Towers* of this kind of assurance in the writing is the way in which Rose prepares us, through dialogue between Anthony Martello and his son Edward, for the line which provides the keynote for the collaboration between Anthony and Edward's estranged wife's mother, Marian Bruce ("Hello Maria"), says Anthony "I see you've shaved off your moustache." As delivered by Alan Cassell, this line brought down the house, and Rose has obviously calculated very precisely that it should have this effect.

The play is full of such felicitous use of comedy, potent one-liners issuing out of seemingly preparatory dialogue. The form of the play facilitates the production of such one-liners since it exploits many of the conventions of farce. Gathered together at Martelli Towers (Edward's holiday cottage at Portmarnock) through the device of a confusion about whose turn it is to spend the weekend are Edward and his

estranged spouse Jennifer, their respective "lovers", Edward's sister Vivian, accompanied by Edward's old friend and rival "old" Buzz, and finally Edward's late Australian father and Jennifer's mother.

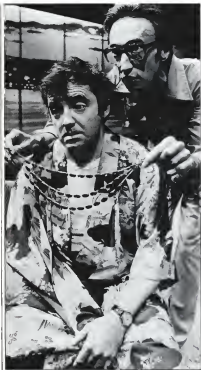
Edward's difficulties in coping with his father's expectations, his estranged wife, and his sister Vivian, whom he attempts to "rescue" from the consequences of his liaison with the friend of his wilder youth, "old", are all worked through in an atmosphere of farcical snags and entrances (in the first act) reminiscent of Feydeau.

Alex Rose demonstrated, with his fine 1976 production of *Caroline Lamb*—another sign too, that he has an affinity for the work of Alex Rose. The current production confirms that affinity. The show is nicely paced and Rose has struck a fine balance between the farcical comedy and the undertones of seriousness, which are largely present in Edward Martello's culture of discontent.

Here, we are told, concerned of the character is one whose more laughter is a consequence of pain, and Steve Jodrell convincingly justified this conception with his finely controlled performance. Jodrell, who was in his younger days a gifted but erratic performer, has matured well and has learned to judge to a neat the relation between the mood of an audience and the timing of his performance. In a cast distinguished by energy and strength of performance he stood out. As the companion with whom Edward Martello expects to spend a quiet weekend, Francesca Jones, Pyper Williamson explored her considerable expertise to delighting, eliciting a good many laughs from her presentation of Francesca's naivety and pathetic desire to please, but also the audience's sympathy for her sense of tragedy. An Edward's wife Jennifer, Keith Taylor managed the difficult transition from estranged whereabouts to the mature reconciliation to her relationship with Edward and with great skill and delivery.

The tenderness of the play in the direction of farce are perhaps most evident in the character of Louise Randall, "radical rock radio DJ". He is concerned in a spirit of exaggeration which approaches caricature. Peter Russell played Randall both bravely and with great energy, making a comic success of a role which could easily have become merely an embarrassment to the play. His depiction Jodrell's control and Russell's energy, perhaps the most interesting performance of the evening came from newcomer Alan Piper, who handled the difficult role of Vivian (who is, according to Rose "the keynote of the play's self") with an assurance helping her relative inexperience. Of the other players Alan Cassell, in the comic role of Anthony Martello, was most notable despite the tendency for his scenes to slide around between the extremes of high-Swedish and public school Australia. Design, by Sue Russell, was refreshingly crisp, un-fussy and efficient.

Well produced and well-cast, *Martelli Towers* is an unqualified success as a well-written entertainment.



Big Sydney Toys

REVIEWS

DOROTHY HEWITT

Big Toys by Patrick White. Old Time Theatre Company, Parade Theatre, Kensington NSW. Opened 27 July 1977. Director: Don Watson. CASTING: Mark Gould, designer: Bruce Deanna, fashion stylist: Vanessa Alexander, lighting: Jerry Lutz, stage management: Joe Walters, Patsy Roberts. Backstage: Rosemary Q-L. Arthur Dignan: Max Collen. Rosemary: Terry Luggie. Max Collen.

Patrick White's first new play for fourteen years? What to expect? The rumours had been flying, but it had all been played pretty close to the chest - not impressionistic, no, disconcerting, yes, no, really, not like the other plays definitely no.

So to The Parade with an incredible sense of occasion for *Big Toys*. "We'll be interested to see what you make of it. You've always been such a rabid White fan."

The conversation in the foyer later seemed to become the conversation on stage. What do they think about, the Old Time patrons, seeing themselves writ strange and sad on that hanging set? Do drivers of ice go into their graves?

Arise from *The Marriage of Figaro*, melodic, piercing and surely right. Kate Fitzpatrick lounging on a huge contemporary circular bed, dressed in a white muslin robe, balancing a giant red balloon on the top of our impossibly elegant skeletonist and stool, coming into a red telephone, "I'm concerned about people dating."

We are in the world of expensive toys and this high flyer, the amiable Mrs Rosemont, is the most elegant toy of them all.

In the glasshouse bedroom above the great, glittering arc of the harbour, and the black void of the wind of reminiscence, a better time play out Patrick White's chilly, domestic allegory.

Rachel Rosemont, QC, Max his wife and Terry Luggie, the union leader, are all caught in this Point Piper mansion, and only Terry leaves a wall partially alive.

The theme might be, we are all finally corruptible but some are more corruptible than others. The toys are far more and everwides and whiskey and firearms and pay-offs and harbour views, and real

Left: Max Collen and Arthur Dignan

working class lovers, and such bi-sexual husbands, anti-american meetings, a hard card at the Labor Party, and Mag also described a ride from Tibbetsburg to Point Piper.

"Mag says make everything right. Keep the children quiet." It is all very Sydney Mag in the centre-piece of the play — she is the big Toy, the kept lady, the dabbler in love and amusement, she is the view of the Harbour and even Sydney itself, rich, stylish.

"Style is everything," subtly beautiful, a woman in materials who makes she was something else, and brings her past with her into the play. Daddie the banker who eventually tried to rape her on the floor of the man, as she bashed from Tibbetsburg, and made it into the bourgeoisie — she wears clothes as well, she was as good. "Oh, you Donkeyskin, I never seem to have time for reading." This past rules all their lives. Rachel, the poet, little, rich boy, who always wanted a big footballer mate, and now wants Terry. Terry the lapid-Catholic (named Conscience) union boss with the impressively idealised figure of his dead wife Mary behind him, and Mag on the ball before him.

"You're corrupt and rotten Mag." Mag gives him a circle of gold placed with elephant's hair to wear round his neck, she makes him carry her pencils back home, she tells him she has "some intellectual core of good not quite smothered by all this drag." She tells him about "the one you search for and never find", she tells him he will always remain "above suspicion for her."

Using him for her husband's latest court case she endures the gaze of his enormous figure bashed over the harbour, sick with self-loathing. "I was the molten witness Rachel wanted, above suspicion." As she sits in a pool of still white light on the ball behind him she is the symbol of this rich mistress of a city her lips spread around her. She cannot stand the black wind off that harbour when the glister is gone.

"The black westerly preys and destroys me."

When it is all over, and Terry has given back the keys of the Ferrari, his pay-off for selling out on the uranium question and trade union principles, the betrayal has still taken place. He is a working class hero, he is "inclined to leave his chairman on the platform". The audience of Miss Cullen's playing of Terry Lago is shadowed and enveloped. Terry is a weak man, and as corruptible as most of us. He has old fashioned views on mag things, at most of the Australian Catholics working class of his age group here. Cullen puts the essential weakness and sadness of the character across, the man who can only relate to a weak deal of power, who wants the beautiful Mag, but can't get at her humanity, can only blame her for his downfall. Arthur (Dignity, underplaying beautifully the sickly corrupt Rachel Beaumont, is the perfect foil for Cullen's uneasy co-Catholic, with all his old moral-

ity half intact, and his new morality as shaky as his old.

Does Terry have a loser? It's a question you can't really ask in this Sydney morality tale. They all lose and win, some more drastically than others. And when the game is over the posthumous remains are at always lost. Mag has her Ferrari, the harbour is still mirrored outside.

Rachel, the toy master, "nothing's harmful if you analyse it", has not even taken the last round. As Mag lets in the blackness she fears, for a moment we all hear the wind off the harbour. "She's a very few minutes under the compass."

The ensemble playing of Arthur Dignity, Kate Fitzpatrick and Max Cullen is a joy and a terror to watch. Jim Sherman's cool brilliant touch is over everything, the set design is the triumph of the play. "Today what is important is style." For once everybody from dancer to designer is actors know perfectly well what they are doing.

Australia's greatest resident moral teller, in the bookshops and on stage, has done it again. Look you Sydneysiders and export, listen you Australians and cheer. That's your black wind blowing over Sydney harbour.

If this is entertainment let's have some more of it please

CONFUSIONS

PETER KINNA

Confusions by Alan Ayckbourn, Marston Street Theatre, Sydney. Opened 12 July 1977. Dances by Ted Craig. Designer, Brian Nicklin. With Louise Page, Kerry Walker, Barry Lewis, Philip Mason and Trevor East.

I arrived at the Marston Street Theatre in time to read my programme before the performance began and was rather startled to find dated through it, what sounded curiously like a justification for the type of fare they have been presenting over the past few years.

For their tenth birthday (I read) "A musical was chosen as a statement of policy. We aim to entertain." There was a Celine Dion quote: "There is a place in every large city for a head-on desire — to entertain people." And a study bearing

over poor Alan Ayckbourn's photograph were the words "He has no messages, no profound means, gives no advice." What can they mean by all that? Surely not that only people with absolutely nothing to say are entertaining? If, indeed, this is their belief then I must hasten to warn them (I'm sorry Alan) that there is a quake in their woodland! Mr Ayckbourn does have a message and it is exactly the same as the one expressed by Arthur Cullen, a loving concern with the frailties of human nature. The difference between them is a matter of weight, that's all.

The five short plays which make up *Confusions* are simply delightful. They are five fables in that they are couched in an imagined landscape and somebody's irony is at the centre of each one. In *Master Figure* it is a woman so harassed by her children that she treats a couple of would-be-helpful neighbours as though they were conscientious underlings. In *Dancing Companion* it is a man driven by the anguish of loneliness to accept a totally uninterested girl into sharing a large with him. In *Between Mountains* the irony is spread over four doors in a restaurant who are meeting each other of lack of concern while the reluctant service of a meal arrives and departs. *Confusions: A Free show* as a group of charity workers getting ready for a fête while their expectations of each other are hilariously and sadly deflated all around them. The evening ends with the low key *A Talk at the Park* which because of its total simplicity is possibly the most moving piece of all. Five people sit on park benches each eager to communicate with the other but they are finally trapped into silence by suspicion.

The pieces are played by a strong company of actors: Louise Page, Philip Mason, Barry Lewis, Trevor East and Kerry Walker. However I feel that the director, Ted Craig, does a little more up to the material. He turns *Confusions: A Free show* into a vaudeville sketch, and in *Between Mountains* the complex rhythms of interrupted speech and music created on by the diners of counterpoint to the slow translocation of their waiter are rehearsed rather than realised.

He's uncertain with the actors too. Kerry Walker plays her confused-out Mimi as simply weary, she should be absolutely punch drunk. Philip Mason plays his desperate man in *Dancing Companion* for comedy, he should be playing for reality and allowing the audience itself to carry the comedy. This sort of directional dance is needed throughout to ring up full value and it is often missing.

The settings by Brian Nicklin are suitable. It's a pity they have to be so cramped. Fairs needs space in order to clearly define movement. I shared the evening with a large theatre party of people who obviously enjoyed every minute of it. I had a good time myself.

It is what the Marston Street Theatre means by entertainment then, by all means, let's have some more of it please. No justification necessary.



The show *Side By Side By Sondheim* tributes him as the best lyricist, most adventurous composer and most considerable musical dramatist in the American theatre today.

ROBERT PAGE

Hello World~ this is Sondheim.

Few full-scale musicals can now be mounted because of the enormous expense of putting large casts on stage with orchestras to back them. In recent years the mini-musical has come into its own. *Cats*, *Turandot* and *The Twentieth and All Time Jazz*.

Take a handful of songs, preferably well known, a small combo, and a handful of talented performers and with a musical umbrella conjure up a period feeling, or pay tribute to a writer, Gilbert and Sullivan, a Cole Porter, or a Noel Coward. A recipe for success: Stephen Sondheim, alive, thinking, and at large as with a lot of soul still ahead of him, is being given this treatment.

The show *Side By Side By Sondheim* includes him to the stars of George Gershwin, Irving Berlin and Richard Rogers, as the best lyricist, most adventurous composer and most considerable musical dramatist in the American theatre today. "Though Sondheim's recent works have not met with unexpected success, and though few of his songs have deeply rooted themselves on the popular consciousness, it is the drama as he writes, the hard edges and lack of sentimentality in his comment on modern life, and the power, if too rich for the pop parade, of his music which makes this a formula for remarkable success."

Sondheim goes beyond the pattern and schedule which has become the cliché of Broadway. Each song in this collage is a miniature playlet of the desperation underlying urban existence, such as Jackson's collage of "marriage has many pains but ecstasy (which I take to mean backsliding) has few pleasures", on the break up of relationships, social quack and quackness, neighborhood, children, even money — even the failed Hollywood myth dissolving as miserably as the American dream. As one critic put it: "The most dramatic songs are sung through great teeth." The world is that of the U.S.

metropole but all roads lead to New York in the scenarios.

In fact, the idea was conceived in England — perhaps a rock musician to recognize the work of an outsider — and then was taken with the original cast in Broadway where the critics fell over themselves in the scramble for superlatives, admitting it pining that America had been better at its own game. Since then a local company has been formed in New York with musicians Dublin and Toronto all playing to full houses and tremendous press response.

How right then, in this age of media to cast John Lawe in the part of the outsider — the role created by another media man Noel Storrans who also directed the original production. As neither man for the two female and one male musical talents he links the songs together with comments on their origins, notes on Sondheim and off the cuff remarks which will become topical as talkback radio.

It's not really an acting part but one that requires the cool, unexcited and, rebellion of the outsider sub-lition. His warden's dealings with his radio audience and the almost satiric parody of his diagnosis of their problems sugar well for the hard edge the show needs.

In interview though, the craggy Lawe, drops a line into up his shoes and countless TV appearances, viewed apprehensively of treading the boards. With no memory of any stage acting and definitely quite professionally he convinced himself with the thought that "it will be alright as long as I don't." Of course he has done it by invitation not, addition and seems to have been fascinated by the curious fear of confronting an audience face to face. With little to do except stare that magnificence since in a show that is acclaimed the world over one can't help feeling that the text has been passed before it's even been taken. But then Lawe

is not a man to let on anything but conviction.

The most attractive thing for him besides the built-in entertainment value is the use of all American talent. Those actually performing the songs (Lawe has several gold records to his credit but won't be singing in this) are Bill Pomeroy, the well-loved star of musical comedy here and no stranger to Sondheim having played in *A Little Night Music*; Geraldine Morrow, again with a strong musical show background and Benjamen John, Australian by adoption, TV actor and another performer from *Night Music*.

Even the production team boasts indigenous talent, including Ray Cook currently doing *A Chorus Line* in London and the musical director of the original British production of *Side By Side*, and Helen Macgregor, born here but co-producing from H. M. Tennant's (London) collaboration with Australian Bill Greenhouse. With the show depending on many topical allusions, having the locals cast, despite the reputation of the British in America, has a significance beyond that of recognition of the talent here.

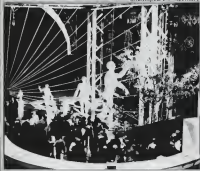
The set has to be minimal as a background for songs culled from musicals as diverse as *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, *Company*, *Fiddler* and many others, but there will be nothing minimal about the costumes or the New York Times Square site party to mark the Sydney opening at the Theatre Royal, (27 September after four nights in Canberra beginning 21 September). The producers are taking a whole floor of the MLC building for what they expect to be the extent of the season.

And a fair fare means not what when for John Lawe? Is this a new direction? Even before reading it, the stage seems to have embraced him. "I would like to do straight acting parts — but only by invitation."

International

The *Berlin Theatertreffen* which takes place in West Berlin in May each year is an annual round-up of the ten most striking productions of the preceding season in the German-speaking theatre. In practice the German Democratic Republic ignores the event, so the choice is restricted to the Federal Republic (where there are 2000 new productions annually), Austria and Switzerland. The Austrians, with their conservative temperament and preference for solid actors' theatre rarely get into the final selection, for this is a directors' festival, and the jury of critics looks for ingenious and inventive productions. The Austrian for 'ingenious and inventive' is 'outrageous', which partly explains why all the productions on show this year came from the Federal Republic, Basel and Zurich occasionally represent Switzerland, but neither had anything to show on this occasion.

Shakespeare's Memory



Germany

This year's *Berlin Theatertreffen*

Hugh Rorrison

The chosen productions were Carlo Goldoni's *Service of Two Masters* (dir. Niels-Peter Rudolph) and Goethe's *Faust I and II* (dir. Claus Peymann) from the Württembergische Staatstheater, Stuttgart; Shakespeare's *Memory* (dir. Peter Szondi) a company project from the Schauspiel am Halleschen Ufer, Berlin; *Antony* (dir. Agostino Fernandez) a group project, and Thomas Heide Gahler (dir. Peter Zadek) from Bochum; Shakespeare's *Othello* (dir. P. Zadek) and Karl Valentin's *Zwangsverheiratung* (*Abducted Women*) (dir. Ulrich Herrigt) from the Schauspielhaus Hamburg; Heide Gahler (dir. NP Rudolph) from the Schillertheater, Berlin; *Comrades in Arms* (dir. Hans Neuenfels) from Frankfurt Schauspiel; Lorenzo Monaco von Rosenfeld (dir. Dieter Dorst) from the Münch Kammerspiele. A parade of established names, since Neuenfels, Peymann, Rudolph, Szondi and Zadek have among them had twenty-four productions in the Theatertreffen in the last five years. None closer an interesting and varied crop.

The two chosen productions merit a closer look. The whole tradition of middle-class drama from Lessing to Hasenpferd has come under close scrutiny in Germany in the last decade, not least Heide, whom the Germans have made so much their own as Shakespeare. This has all happened under the general heading 'evaluation of our bourgeois heritage', as committed theatre traced the roots of modern industrial society. One of the subtlest responsibilities of a twentieth century script was Fritz Stern's ironic production of *Peter Götz* at the Schauspiel am Halleschen Ufer in 1971. In considering the visual framework for the play and the period costumes embedded in the observation, the production team noted:

It will not be enough to know the nineteenth century on the basis of the facts that you need for a Marxist analysis. Examination of the whole broad surface of the nineteenth century, the wealth of contradictions that it produced, will be even stimulating for our ideas, things we would still scratch today, the interlocking of traditions that in practice can be traced back to the baroque period with the rapid advance of science and technology, the interlocking of so-called urban and rural cultures, the simulation of pharmacy in Central European not only about the colonies.

The popular impact of capitalism, imperialism, improved communications, the opening-up of Africa and America, were examined and used as the background for the quantum figure of Peter Götz, who was played by ten different actors at different stages of his development. He was seen as

1970 performance centered on the theme of religion. At St. Paul church, the Great St. Martin Massacre was played by the Berlin public, largely unaware of Grotowski's spiritual justification to the title role. This play may never have been done in English; though it is a shame in Germany. On this showing it might go down well in translation in the land of production. William Gaskill gave Paraglyph's *Reverence for Nature* (1967) at the 1970s.



Hochum Hedda Gubler

Hochum Hedda too had a strong female lead. This was a group production, recommended by Hans Neuenfels, which attempted to interpret *Medea* as a vision of women, and introduced contemporary references where possible. Jason becomes a vain character, usually symbolized by a pair of steady white Oxford bags above which he wears a velvet *Medea's* children have appeared as a result of parental neglect and are reluctant thirteen-year-olds. All of *Medea's* dealings with men are coloured by their sexual attitudes, so that the important thing of *Medea*, for example, is only prepared to offer her asylum when the manager is sure a female audience for him. The general drift of the production: sidelining the usual subjugation of women, which Neuenfels insists, is plain for all to read in the original text, was clear enough, but the accidental effect seems had run not from the classical message who only has to reject the death of Kreon and become a woman on wearing a massive phallus and went through all manner of erotic connotations as he spoke his lines. Over the top as a production, but it has apparently attracted a big audience and stimulated live night discussions on women's rights in Frankfurt.

Of the two group projects on show, *Buchanan's Infancy* was an improvisation



Paraglyph



Hochum Hedda Gubler

based on the last's experience, and sometimes which slipped itself into a both to dark plot — regrettably. The kind of thing has been about on the British stage for some time, but is new with a liberating, liberating addition to the subtextual language in Germany. The Schaubühnen's *Medea's* *Medea*, which I looked on in my last article is an attempt to reconstruct the form of *Medea's* *Medea* in a kind of neo-classical performance. Lessons on the cosmology of *Medea*, Copernicus and Tycho Brahe with huge wall-maps of their respective astronomical systems. Readings from *Herbert's* *Herbert's* *Herbert's* in a reconstruction of Leonardo's *Revised Theatre* of 1532. *Medea's* *Medea* is a manual of 1000 And of course various scenes, sketches, bits of juggling, acrobatics. The elaborate exercise in theatre history was presented on the largest principle with various events going on simultaneously for you to dip into at will. The whole thing appeared produced in a way that only the most terrible, subverted theatre could afford. The event was a warm-up for a forthcoming production of *Twelfth Night* which will re-unite some of the cast, and of course the one Karl Ernst Hermann had built a wooden scaffolding, which carried the lighting grid and enabled painted flats to be dropped round the audience, as well as affording platforms for elevated appearances. If *Twelfth Night* brings Peter from the podium all his other major productions have all will have been justified.

The Hamburg production of *Medea's* *Medea*, based on sketches by Karl Valentin (1882-1945) is of more personal interest. Valentin was a Munich dialect comedian who was constantly entangled in his own vocabulary, and with the musician's spirit around him. One of his sketches shows a proud father taking his newly confirmed son out for a stroll. "Spaghetti!" Broch was a fan, and Michael Cowley has aptly compared him to Will Rogers, though Valentin was always a double act with Karl Karlstadt. It is interesting in that straight actors are now taking up this comic material, and experimenting with it in dialect other than Bavarian.

Stuttgart again had two productions in Berlin, confirming its status as one of the freest cities on the German scene. Nida Peter Rudolph directed Goldoni's *Amoroso*

of Two Masters, which for the last thirty years has been seen in terms of Giorgio Strehler's superb, Italian Piccolo Teatro production with Marcello Marchi as Truffaldino at Milan in 1947. Rudolph transposed the Commedia dell'arte comic into the better world of German comedy, where it worked well. There is evidence here that Rudolph's experiments with improvisation using objects based in the props store is working its way through the system. Hans Freyer's act was a bare stage with a motley array of old chairs on one side, a couple of stools on the other and a dressed backcloth. Her costumes too were a mishmash, ranging from the crumpled drapery suit and muddy shoes for Truffaldino to eighteenth-century coats and top hats for Pantalone. The characters were named into German 1960s. Since the actor, becoming an involved Corps member with his sister dangling between his legs and trying to keep his efforts to be better. The evening was carried by Peter Schumann's shabby deadpan clown of a Truffaldino.



Freyer

And finally *Faust I and II* were two crowns. The director, Claus Peymann, and the designer, Achim Freyer, took equal credit for this production, which exploits the potential of Grotowski's handling resources for visual spectacle. Freyer's stage environment and intricate costumes are worth a visit in themselves, and beggar description. Take the *Prologus in Mexico*, which is often cut; Peymann/Freyer put a Santa Claus God high in a box above the stage. Flanked by angels in pink helmets (created from the Indian Army) and long green with stiff gold armbands which serve as machine guns with which they deliver him down crashed as God delivers his heavenly. Much of the text is omitted in this way, indeed the production brings out a strain of comedy that nobody had noticed in *Faust* before. This causes problems with the Goethean tragedy, roughly the second half of *Faust I*, which is played without visual support against simple reversed flats. Milton Lustig in *Faust* and Theres Affolter as Gretchen don't quite pull it off after the preceding spectacle. The Stuttgart style of production is open to criticism for its cavalier handling of the text, but Peymann/Freyer have compensated with *Faust*, and with *Das Kuckuckchen von Antebrom* last year, on anything less than terms, and the gains have been considerable.

Festival of Fools in Amsterdam 2-20 June 1977

"The fools are there are so many groups from England," says a spectator of the London-based troupe Abolabolab, "in that there are so many fools there."

The Festival of Fools in Amsterdam does not only boast the best of the English vaudeville tradition, but also a wide assortment of mime, mask plays, puppetry, slapstick and improvised comedy routines, from as far away as Argentina and Los Angeles.

It is rightly called a celebration, and the mood is very much one of laughter, finding a common ground, and of openness to every possible form of theatre entertainment.

This is the third year of the festival, which was initiated by American mime artist Janne Edwards of Friends Roadshow, who answers the question Why a Festival of Fools?

"Simply for the reason that the fool is one of the most meaningful characters in theatre history. The fool is the individual who has the ability to communicate to the public information about their pain, their passion, and also shed light on a future. The fool is a comedian who a mirror of his surroundings."

June this year has seen over 50 groups presenting around 300 performances in the course of three weeks in three theatres as well as the Vondelpark open air theatre and the many canal-filled old market places of Amsterdam.

In contrast to the cynicism often felt in Europe's established and highly subtitled theatre world, there was a refreshing openness and wish to experiment at the festival — almost a lingering sense of awe of new possibilities, not yet exhausted.

The Melweg, a renovated tenement building just a stone's throw across a canal from a public station, is a youth centre with two theatre rooms, restaurant and bar-room, it is government-subsidized by more than \$100,000 a year. It was packed every night and by midnight the hall smokes lay no heavy over the Theatreland that lay one needed was to inhale. (Holland's drug laws have been loosened recently to distinguish between hard and soft drugs, and between selling and possessing up to 50 grams for personal use.) Only a continuous walk along the canal, and one could choose instead the Shilly which seems to cater to a more commercial theatre public; as well, and where there was more bar service instead. At other places with a membership card costing a mere two dollars, one could buy a ticket for the entire evening. For another two, and move from room to room to see 3-4 of the many offerings, including Frans Zwangers' experimental film. Many shows went on at different times at the various venues and



thus could reach a wide audience. And shows went on until one or two in the morning.

The two tea is alive during the Festival of Fools when the groups perform for afternoon audiences who would perhaps find the Melweg scene less unfamiliar to those. The Dan, Nieuwmarkt, Regent and even the Amsterdam Historical Museum provided safe savings points for the stacks of everything from the Women's Liberation group Sisterhoods from New York with their laugh and deliberately unpolitical "Women in Violence" show to the juggling clown of the Great Salt Lake Mime Troupe or the new six pink rock routine of the Amsterdam-based Friends Roadshow.

With its clear emphasis on relevance to the present, an consciousness not based solely on words and an diversity of form, the Festival of Fools may well become one of the most exciting international alternative theatre fairs around. Working as it is on a shoestring budget, which means a limitation in programming, there is a danger it may become too much of an isolated thing as it cannot afford to pay travel expenses for groups from far away, only local and hotel expenses. Yet, as several performers told me, many groups are now planning their first itinerary around the festival in order to be there because they had it such a valuable experience in terms of inspiration and exchange of ideas.

Recruitment so far has been mainly from England (Anne Staines, Footloose Theatre, Anne Swan, Mole Rat, Theatre Slapstick etc.), Holland (Pippen Drop, Bannister), environmental-theatre group Degroup, etc.) and neighboring countries like France with a striking similarity in styles of times the random slapstick or the French-style mime. Among the more interesting shows I saw were two from Argentina: Le Grand Kevor, with three members Chaplin inspired mime show of the same name, and the busy, mind-bending antics of Carlos Trullas with his one-man show. Another high point was the Los Angeles Mink Theatre which explores the potential of masks in rendering contemporary L.A. society with its pathetic human deluge.

The festival could do with more influx from different parts of the world and the Australia Council could do more than to provide a travel grant for a group that would like to stand and perform next year. This year there was even an initiative Fools School with crash classes in everything from fire eating to juggling and bicycle acrobatics. A few more fools might do Australia theatre a lot of good.

AO Sydney season's first month immeasurably better in the event than one might have predicted



The first month of this year's major Sydney season of the Australian Opera turned out immeasurably better in the event than one might have predicted it would.

Laverne Rogers, which I reviewed last month, turned out to be not only an excellent vehicle for Joan Sutherland but a fine ensemble effort for the company, and the other early season new production, Auber's *Jon David*, was a good deal more satisfying in the event than I had feared it might be on first acquaintance with its fairly staid line and its largely pedestrian score. Nor was any of the three revivals of the period without interest — *The Barber of Seville* and *The Tales of Hoffmann* for the personnel changes we were treated to this time round, *Queen* for the spectacular improvement in Hugues Testamont's performance of the title role as much as for the welcome return of Donald Smith to the roster of the AO after a break a year of estrangement.

It took some performances for *Jon David* to hit top form, but right from the start it was well worth seeing and hearing

for John Copley's magnificently humorous production, the aggressively critical sets of Henry Gordon and costumes of Michael Bennett, the vocal star turn of Isabel Bechames and the impeccably correct and precise conducting stick of Richard Bányai.

Robert Gard's *David* was an acting triumph from the word go, but it was not until several performances into the season that he was fully at ease vocally. Much the same could be said of Heather Begg's Lady Alceste, and even Dennis Olsen was not always absolutely in character as Lord Alceste on opening night. But the music of *Jon David* proves its rehearsing decidedly not to be entirely in the category of omnisciently forgettable fairy flow: no one would dream it rivals consistently with the greats, but it bears a good few rehearsals when it is performed with the consistent sense of style a Bányai can instill into an ensemble. It is fragile music which rather belittles and exhilarates with a champagne effervescence or falls flat on its face. Likewise, the dramatic side of pieces like *Jon David* done with the Frailty tongue-

in-check lightness of touch that Copley manages consistently in this *David*, the piece seems to have a good deal more nerve than any dispassionate analysis of its ingredients could reveal.

It is the little things — both musical and dramatic, this make this *David* such a joy — the tiny scraps of orchestral wood that are handled with such precision, the subtleties of vocal inflection, spoken or sung, the comic detail of the putently phony acts, costumes and props, the little bits of stage business that not only amuse first time round but keep you discovering things you missed if you go back and see the piece again.

Copley himself says he worked particularly hard on the details of the production and it certainly shows. For *Jon David* is as successful as — dare I make the comparison? — *Les Tricoteurs* or *Norah* in 1975 was not. For Copley's seventeen-hour drama uses the slim plot, unbelievable (the often terrible music, whereas much of his attention in *Tricoteurs* seemed oddly self-indulgent — even at odds, at times, with the score and genre of the piece).



Jon David

With *Don Quixote* there are no such reservations. Copley knows what he is about just about every inch of the way and gets on with the job of entertaining and amusing his audience in a highly sophisticated manner. He vocalizes as a whole of itself that is literally more than the eye can take in fully on one exposure, hence the unimagined joy to be derived from going back to see his *Quixote* more than once.

Take, for instance, the marvellously apt and creative stage business in Richardson's momentous aria at the start of Act III, or Donato's aria at the start of Act III. Copley is hard at work throughout both these arias, just as he is on the remarkable trio in Act I, where Donato is making mock-satirizations here to Lady Alonzo and Lord Alonzo's very name, but even as Copley could not have advised what he did unless he had been blessed with an vocally and dramatically informed team as Gird, Begg and Oliver.

Given it is not so obviously successful here as he has been in some of his G and S efforts with the AQ, but it is nice to see his venture outside the particularly constituted, stylized corner of the repertory represented by the little man who sings the patter songs in Donato's role — unless — some would say overacting — his limited vocal resources, but proved himself, increasingly in the production was run as fully, a real dramatic start in an important part which lacks the vocal display of Buchanan's, the flair and swagger of Gird's, or the comic potential of Begg's (singing gently out of her throat with the devilish disguise that is Donato and the humor implicit in the inevitable plight of the over-dressed English lady on safari in Mexico City).

An even more difficult role to bring off is that of the handsome young sergeant, Lorrance, a two-dimensional minor blackhead in the best tradition of comic opera's romantic heroines, Anna Andri sang the part well and turned in a workmanlike acting performance with the odd trace of comic flair.

In lesser roles, Neil Warren-Smith was a superbly shiny Indian (he, *Quixote* later an adequate co-thing without sparkling with anything like the same brilliance. And Donald Shanks made about as much of the clunker, *Señorita's* father, as there is to be made of him.

In late June, Marilyn Richardson became the third soprano to tackle the quadruple baritone in the AQ's *Tales of Hoffmann* (following in the illustrious footsteps of Jean Sutherland in 1974 and Joan Carden in 1975). The rest of the major parts were played by the same singers who created the roles with Sutherland: Raymond Myers as the villain, Henri Wilton as Hoffmann, Gwyneth Ever as the grotesquely comic servants.

Probably, the old hands were even more insured this time round, equally probably, Richardson was most successfully effective in Antonio, the Act III baritone whose vocal style suits her ideally. Her Olympia was surprisingly successful in

coping with the colossus demands of the role, less credible (surprisingly) when it came to getting across the feeling that she is a mechanical doll who can give the illusion of life only as long as the wound up like a clock every few hundred bars. Giulietta, the Venetian cousin of Act II, demands more substantial vocal depths than Richardson can plumb, but she is physically more than voluptuous enough as a red-headed mink in the audience would have worried much about that. Overall, it was a performance more than able to hold its own against the two Joans who went before.

This year's Carmen was infinitely better than last year's original staging of Tom Loggwood's production, the major claim being Hughes's Tovarog's spectacular improvement in the title role rather than the presence of a new Don Jose (Donald Smith) or the improved conducting of Russell Chinnell. Chinnell's reading of the score, particularly in the master of tempo, is a good deal more traditional — and satisfying — than Richard Mayne's. Sometimes he goes too fast, as in the entrance, but he rightly takes the smuggler's quartet like the wind and now he allows the score adequate time to breathe at most other points, whereas last summer he did not.

Despite his admitted shortcomings on the stage, front it would make a very dance-oriented open-door to object to the presence of Smith in an opera set. His voice is at least on the brink of greatness, an almost constantly thrilling sound that has been one of the AQ's greatest assets over the years. And it has certainly been kept in good form during its just in months. It is a cause for unqualified rejoicing that he and the AQ have turned the hatches at least for enough so he will be making guest appearances with the national company this year and next, even if on appearing to full-time rates.

But it must be said that Don Jose was a considerable comedown from Ron Stevens' original. If any corporal serving under me had been as modest as he was to Lieutenant Zampa in the Act I, I would have had him court-martialed forthwith, and at no stage did he convince me he was really involved enough with his Carmen to be capable first of desertion, then of murder, to avoid being her. He was not nearly deflated enough toward her at the start, nor was he obsessed enough with her at the end the biggest trouble with his reluctance of the role was that his Don Jose was static, whereas the dramatic crux of the opera is that Don Jose is a self-interest and eventually destroyed by his relationship with Carmen. It is Carmen who dies rather than change her lifestyle.

It was and that Smith made his representations with the AQ in terms of a performance which was so dramatically wrong, for he has proved in the past that he is capable of a good deal better. And Tovarog's was thus deprived of a suitable foil for her own Captain Mark Two, which is immeasurably better than her Captain Mark One. Last year indeed,

she gave the impression she was almost fighting against the role, trying perhaps to play down the beauty of the character, deprive Carmen of her lungs and make her more and more formless substance than she might by rights be.

Tovarog's 1977 Carmen is totally different: she is a vocal joy to watch Don Smith and a dramatic joy to watch Ron Stevens. I look forward to experiencing the pleasure of the dramatic fireworks that ought to result from a confusion of Stevens and the new Tovarog in this fascinating opera.

The welcome rejuvenation of the Sydney Conservatorium in the opera field continued late in June with a production of Stravinsky's *Swan Lake* in the reduced (by mistake of a new page object) stage of the Art's main hall in view of the severe physical constraints. Michael O'Keefe's sets for the piece were adequate, providing as they did, a two-level performance area which was at least acceptable, if not perhaps ideal, both for the village square which is the venue for Acts I and III, and the forest which is the setting for Act II.

Similarly, Frances Gwynne's direction made quite a good stab at keeping things moving even within the inevitably cramped stage areas available, though Eric Chapman's conducting tended at times to be a good deal more literal than was appropriate to the score or necessary because of the student nature of the orchestral forces involved.

Neither set of central forms (there two rather than were double cut in this production) was ideal, but all four singers had a good deal of merit. As Maerchen, Annabelle Thorne had a vocal edge on Jennifer Lindfield, while Lindfield had the edge in the dramatic department. As Jenik, her lover, John Mann was a good deal more vocally pleasing than Geoffrey Harris, but Harris had a slight edge dramatically and continued to show flashes of vocal beauty that bode well for his future. In the major supporting roles, Geoffrey Crook was a superbly overdone marriage broker (in both cases), and Jonathan Hughes made a very good job indeed of the difficult slithering village idiot, Vaska.

And there were some marvellous moments of ensemble good fun when the storm came to town, with its comm-mingling (played by Gary Harris) and its delicious dancing (Katerina) (played by Claire Ford). Some innovative stage business here, particularly involving the grotesque strong man and his empire of fishes — was great fun for the kids, and the folk dancing of the Contemporary Dance Association's choreographic course was quite good given the constraints of the set.

Finally, this was quite a good *Swan Lake*, marred primarily by failure to play down sufficiently the glacial dramatic inadequacies of the opera itself, but perhaps, to be fair, that is impossible. And there is sufficient musical merit in this piece to warrant the occasional aching depths its dramatic problems.



Dance Company (NSW)

Tip and Two Numbers are a couple of the most innovative and disturbing works yet seen in this country

Can the dance have a political mind?

Can it align itself with an ideology, to present the ideals and concerns of a group in a convincing and effective manner?

Most people would shake their heads vehemently and point to *Johnny Petruska* as probably the only great ballet that has even the smallest political commitment behind it.

In any case, they would go on to say because political only by hindsight. The making of *Petruska* is the ballet that crystallised the theatrical concepts of Pinaus and Meyerhold, because for later generations a symbol of the dance struggle in Europe Russia that exploded a few years after the 1911 premiere of the ballet.

Pinaus himself apparently had no political motive in mind during the work's creation and many years later Daghilev, a man who loved the old Russia would not conceivably have allowed such a radical colour to creep into any of his productions.

What *Petruska* had going for it was its humanitarian idealism. The right of the small person to live his own life, away from the constraints and control. Any criticism of the little Edwardian society was purely coincidental.

True political theatre, aggroprop theatre, deals in specifics. Certain regulations of certain times or defined social boundaries. Its basic aim is to point up those regulations and hopefully to get them changed. On that count, true political theatre is a very rare bird in western society. It has changed practically nothing. It has pointed up problems, presented them with force but, practically speaking, a provocative speaker on a soap box has done more politically than any amount of staged "Theatre". All of these questions come to mind usually while watching the Dance Company (NSW) in their presentation of *Let's Speak a Ballet: Two Numbers*.

Speak has taken the conscience of the world premiere of one of the greatest, most artificial and strangely sinister ballets of the classical repertoire: *Coppelia* and the one (and half) of the Paris Committee and welded a ballet/theatre piece that is rich, rewarding, and in some ways actually irritating in the way it states points and asks questions.

Some of the points it raises are complex, while a few of the questions it asks are

pointless or else not asked in sufficiently wounding a manner to make one think of an answer. It is a rag bag, but an effective one, revealing, alarming rag bag.

It presents the events of the Paris Committee showing the involvement of the mobs at the barricades and it shows the little plays of "art" and "culture" and "Theatrical Reality" in a way that is true to larger art and quite vicious.

It reminded me in moments of Grotowski play, *The Pitmen's Behaviour The Day After*.

It highlights the comparison between a theatrical version of events or situations and the situations and events in the real, dangerous and palpable outside world.

Two Numbers tells us that "Theatre" is no matter how much it may try to condense the situation, man "define" the real world.

In one scene we get the pantomime (that's the only way of describing it) of France assuming his little doll Swandilda from the clutches of the manipulative Dr. Coppelia and follow the with the dogged determination of the grey people of the Paris streets to build their barricades and draw themselves together for mutual protection.

Later on there is a hilarious parable for Gary Hill as French and Graham Murphy as Mr. Thurn (the French Head of State) each of them waving their hands at each other and each politely refusing the overtures for detente from the other while in the background the other dancers are desperately clashing off and on stage, flinging down sand bags and running for their lives. It is both slapstick and savage.

And then, at the end of the work, the last few surviving members of the Paris community get up and dance to the music from *Coppelia*. The music coming from above and below here and there, so if it had holes shot in the sheet music. It is the last hard slap in a very angry piece of theatre. After all, when the Committee had been shattered and the art was free for Coppelia to go on at the Opera again, it was terribly undermanned because so many of the dancers technicians and others had either been shot or deprived for entering into the real world and taking their stand.

I hope from this rather bald description that one has an idea of the number of fascinating situations and aspects that this truly innovative and serious work unspools

in the theatre.

The trouble is that one loses the theatre, abstracting the concept more than appreciating the actual execution, and here I'm talking in strictly choreographic terms. I'm not polematically alone in this view either. The Dance Company itself had the inspired idea of circulating questionnaire amongst its audiences at the conclusion of the programme and many of them state that people were excited but confused with *Two Numbers*.

But it did inspire heated argument and conversation and surely any work that has "political" aspirations must count itself a partial success if it does so, if it sends people clearly questioning out onto the streets.

But, as choreographic terms, serious aspects of the piece worked against the over-all impact.

It was difficult to adjust one's eyes to the abrupt change between the initial excerpts from *Coppelia*, all very lovely and wonderful in such classical style to the shuffling, huddled sometimes static groupings that followed.

As the piece progressed the disjunctivity seemed on and on could follow the two strands and the way they interacted.

But it needs growing. *Two Numbers* is too diffuse and self-indulgent at the moment. Incidents and attitudes are not pre-processed or defined clearly enough. It seemed to me too that the dancers were contradictory about the idea but were just as confused as the audience about the "motivation" or the meaning behind the ballet's scenes and events.

For those who like to have the information clearly presented to them (a theatre lover or film buff) before they make up their mind, modern dance is an eternal aggravation.

In trying to decide to go or not up in words Graham Murphy's *Tip 1* was presented with one of the most aggravating works I have ever seen.

The only note in the programme for *Tip* is a mess of the documentary definitions of the word itself. "A small pointed anatomy of anything, a gentle hit, a suggestion, to give a gratuity to, an item of information". All these and more are available for the choreographer and the audience to juggle with.

One definition of the word serves well as a starting point. A top being a dumping ground as in a rubbish tip.

When the curtain rises, one is confronted with an obscure setting, a tall metal structure covered and bound in canvas at one side, paper structures at the other and at the back a water trough. The scene is inhabited by seven pygmies

draped in tape. The images of the underwear, the seams of the corset drape fit through one's mind. The ballet's going to be about the unwanted, the mutant and the mysterious you think. Well in some ways it is.

The tall structure is unveiled, it looks like something out of a geometrical theorem. The structure is inhabited by two scantily clothed men.

As the porcelain plates and planks (sorry, I'm in music country) of the live orchestra give way to a rather "Le Sacre du Printemps"-sounding electronic score, the two men battle for supremacy (like the *Manley* (a *Copie* gone underground?).

The mutants jump on and off some what like those creatures in a *B-grade* horror movie. Suddenly a woman steps out of the trough at the back of the stage, soaking wet. The two men dance for her and with her, vying for her attention then subside in gymnastics on the metal stage.

Meanwhile the mutants dash about in a strength approximation of a glacially melted. One of the men gets into the trough and three dancers around, working wet.

Towards the end the two men propped a girl together and the mutants tear down the paper structures and frantically wrap the chromosome up in them as if patrolling rubbish. The end.

There. Try make of that what you can! I trust, that's tantamount.

Like the best of modern dance, it is totally subliminal, impressions change with each viewing.

The whole work is concerned with different aspects of meaning, layers of interpretation. As one migrates one is up in the propaganda, "taped and conscious environmental changes" — the result bewildering, necessarily.

That is the clue perhaps to why it impresses one it carries, in its own inimitable language, the quality of personal experience in this quickly changing society.

All these definitions are flawed, and treated aptly by Murphy's choreography. The dancers themselves progress through the work with an innate understanding of the work's argument, however personal and divergent that collective other pretensions of it are.

All I can say now is that I hope the company perform it again, if possible in other states and I hope a lot of people get to see it.

Tip and Two Numbers are a couple of the most interesting and disturbing works you see in this country and *Tip* in particular would not disgrace the reputation of the Nederlands Dans Theater or one of the more topical American dance companies.

Both works plunge an Australian audience headlong into the mindboggling of contemporary dance. Both works are making up for lost time and the last that Australia has given into the empires of the term "modern dance" or any of their works with the exception of small scraps of Tetley and Mervyn Cunningham. Perhaps that is a blessing in disguise because that leaves the way clear for Australian choreographers to have their say in the way they want to speak without having to peel off the preconceptions and categorisations that even now encumber the modern dance in Europe and America.

As for the other works in the Dance Company's recent programming, both of them are interesting to watch, both are more or less well put together, but neither of them leave me with anything approaching a positive reaction.

Christine Kollias's *Compass* reaches it, as far as I am concerned, a pretty basic idea of balletic hand-stretch down to the hatching of a rather "Tubular Bells" piece of music by Michael Carlton.

Her stated concern in the work is the striving and struggle that we all put into communicating. Struggle that nearly always ends in a deadlock so the process has to be begun all over again.

The only moment where all this comes into any recognisable focus is an extended close ball waltz through the work full of high lifts that end into splined clutches and broken notes. Here the ideas of Kollias come alive, but as for the rest of it, it is one of those ballets that starts and starts and starts but never really gets anywhere.

The same goes for Graham Watson's *Medieval Make*, an ambitious piece of stylised tape, in some in the programme stuffed full of allusions to Marcel Duchamp and the graffitiists, altogether that are more than bid in the work itself.

I much preferred Watson's *Random Harvest* last year. There was movement involved with feeling and meaning, whereas *Medieval Make* is too theoretical, too physically men.

It suffers from the same trouble in Spink's *Two Numbers*, a marvellous concept full of promising material, but material too contentious to be brought under control by its choreographer.

If both Watson and Spink could get out of the habit of idealising, objectifying and theorising over dance, and produce a piece of pure gut feeling, I feel sure that they, with the acceptance they obviously have, can produce a work that is balanced, one touched and logical in its own way. At the moment they are thinking more in terms of tying up steps that in creating a feeling, a statement or an overall design.



Murphy's Tip

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Boxes, Boxes and more Boxes

Beethoven quartets and Bach cantatas

Judging by the supply in reserves, the record market has an insatiable appetite for boxed sets of records. The complete string chamber music of Beethoven, all the Las Haydn masses, the entire works of Schubert (in six boxes), complete sets of 19th century sonatas, concertos and symphonies, many more editions of one composer's works such as the huge DGG compendium of Beethoven. Far from being inundated by this bulky kind of passionless we seem to think it is as if we did not want so much to listen to music as to take a cruise in it. And why not? In the absence, for many people, of a philosophical and religious sense it is possible that we may believe that a box of all the Baroque quartets or the complete Dvořák sequences of the Haydn symphonies represents the only credible path to wisdom we are likely to find. There are obviously boxes and boxes some way to go more than the manufacturer's method of gathering together a scattering of old recordings in order to give them fresh circulation. The best kind of record box is the one in which a single group of performers give a consistent view, as records not too far separated in date, of some phase that we are likely to want to live with.

My leading choice among numbers has to be recent months has been the Philips issue of the complete string quartets by Beethoven played by the Quartaletto Italiano (S747 277) (see above). The quality of reproduction on these discs is delightful. Though the recordings were made separately over a period of several years (the opus 18 quartets being the most recent) the standard and style of recording has remained remarkably consistent and of very high average quality. No doubt this has been further adjusted during re-mastering made for the boxed edition. Some listeners may have a few residual prejudices against hearing an Italian quartet in Austria-German music. But the Quartaletto Italiano belongs to that Italian group of Italian musicians (including Toscanini and Giulini) who are able to interpret northern and southern European music without ever being able to transcend them as coming from one region or another. If the Quartaletto Italiano reflects its origins at all it is in a certain northern Italian poise, allied with warmth but without the slightest trace of excess in tone or phrasing. Its players pass all the tests. They do not try to make the opus 18 quartets sound later or more complex than they are, they have the scale and splendor of style for opus 28 no 1 and the heat, nervous abruptness of manner for opus 25, the slowness for the Great Fugue and

the intellectual and architectural control necessary for opus 131. There are many records with a cultivated sound and performance of unimpeachable accuracy and precision. The only real test for the Quartaletto Italiano set is the moment in the Beethoven series recorded by the Hungarian Quartet, but that is considerably older and the difference in recorded sound is apparent even in re-mastering.

Among the boxes which appear as part of a periodical sequence my undoubted favorites are those containing instrumentalists in Telefunken's wonderful series of the complete cantatas of J.S. Bach. Each box in the series contains two discs (usually enough for five cantatas) and adds to the discs a wealth of documentation, the texts and instrumental parts for each work and the complete scores of all the works in the box. These scores are now being reproduced from the New Bach Edition and provide as a bonus the opportunity of catching up with the remarkable advances made in Bach scholarship in the last fifteen years or so. The artistic directors of the performances are Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Gustav Leonhardt. Pioneers in the use of historically authentic instruments and playing styles, they direct the cantatas up but mean them and present them as cantatas as close as we can hope to come at the present time to the records that Bach himself would have imagined when scoring them. The all-male choral forces (boys and men) also conform to the practice of the churches of Bach's time for similar reasons, almost all the soloists are male. Although the boy soloists constitute the most variable item in the standards of performance, they are generally very good indeed. The point I want to stress is that the attempts at historical fidelity are not merely means to an end; they add for many things something to the impact made by the music. The playing and singing is very stiff!

All the boxes in the Bach cantata series are worth listening to. May I particularly draw your attention to the latest box in the series to be generally available here, Volume 17 (S 3333), two discs, which contains the cantatas numbered 63 to 68 in the old Schenker catalogue. If you have not previously heard the records in this series, this box will offer you a fair sample of the achievements represented by this project, probably the most ambitious and voluminous in the history of recording. The mood of the music ranges from engraved austerity to unrestrained joy, solo singers, choruses and instrumentalists work with supreme ease and skill.

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The Singer and the Dancer *Love Letters from Teralba Road*



Elizabeth Crosby and Ruth Cracknell in *The Singer and the Dancer*

One could suppose it not beyond the capacity of exhibitors to devise a first half that would include one of these

The Australian Film Commission has apparently decided to put some muscle behind some of the smaller feature films into which it has injected money, with the object of getting them before the public. To that end they have arranged releases of the *Union Theatre* at the University of Sydney and screenings for a press that is noticeably reluctant to turn out for anything less than *The Cassandra Crossing* (I may say here that *The Cassandra Crossing* is about as late as a film can be).

It is unfortunate for non-filmers to find a screening, but one of the difficulties in the popular running time of, say, two films: the AFC is rightly pushing — Gill Armstrong's *The Singer and the Dancer* and *Love Letters from Teralba Road* made by Stephen Wallam. The first runs for 58 minutes and the second for 51. There are awkward lengths to fit into the rigid Australian pattern, although one could suppose it was beyond the capacity of exhibitors to devise a first half that would include one of these, another short subject and the indispensable cigarette ad. I suppose the exhibitors simply will not

pay for them when they can get travel publicity films for nothing or those government project films which seem to be about the most industry or Victorian hydro-electric schemes. It opens up the question of the way commercial cinema programmes are structured — why there is so much fluff as a truly continuous programme for instance.

I don't think the AFC's idea of showing *The Singer and the Dancer* and *Love Letters from Teralba Road* together at the *Union Theatre* was necessarily a good one, but I expect they know their own business best. I would have preferred to see each one go on separately as a short subject, prelude to a feature film. *The Singer and the Dancer* has had a success already in Melbourne but *Love Letters* was first presented at the *Union Gill Armstrong* got her plot from a short story by Allen Marshall. She rearranged the characters somewhat but kept to the basic theme, and to the time of the story, which is about frustrations remembered by the old and frustrations being experienced by the young.

The opening is remarkable for its contemplative beauty and peace, a peace shattered by a glimpse of a face, seen by the fall of the curtain, staring out of a window in the landscape, an expression one of controlled fury. That moment over, there is a change to the mundane, even in the grossly mundane *Old Mrs Wilson* is propelled from the farmhouse, down the steps by a woman who is presumably her daughter, and into the doctor's car.

"Now neither don't give the physician any trouble and don't get wandering about", Mrs Wilson is admonished.

A few miles down the road Mrs Wilson throws her hat off into the back seat, pulls up her skirt, props her large feet on the dashboard and smokes a cigarette the doctor gives her. He says the car near a gate into a paddock and she lurches out and makes off up the hill in great strides. The doctor is at the gate, which is that Mrs Wilson pretends to be lame because it is her only way of defending herself against the other boys, snappy, thick-thighed women.

Up the hill, down the other side to the river bank strays Mrs Wilson, she changes into her sundress, takes out another bag, leans her back with her skirt pulled up to fit. The sun warms her legs, and later on the steps are her friends. At this place one day she meets a gay girl called Charlie who has moved with her miserable wheezing lover into a rundown cottage, and is trying to

make a life for herself while he works at the chicken factory and burays his with a local belle. The old woman and the young one talk about men and love. The old woman is full of wisdom which emerges in a measured spurt. The young one is full of love that she won't be able to leave her home. She should marry — he will leave her for the first girl who will give him a lift in his car, north or south.

The players are Ruth Cracknell as old Mrs. Nelson, Elizabeth Cressly as Charlie, Jerry Bayan as the doctor, John Keating as the 'daughter' who is really another woman's daughter (nurtured by Miss Nelson's dead husband), and Charlie's love is played by Russell Kurlit. I have always believed in Ruth Cracknell's intelligent, unorthodox talent and in Gill Armstrong, who has found a director who perfectly understands her. Here is an amazing performance — so sure, so sensitive, so strong, in many ways so funny. She epitomises all the wisdom, intellect, frankness old women who return to the rest of a kind of youthful colour looks and a fragrantness that is undeniable. They are the roses of old people's homes, and good luck to them.

The film is exactly the right length. There should be no more of it, and no less. Which brings up back to the where we came in. *Love Letters from Paradise Road* will make you squint. The people in it are a few minutes down from Michael Threlwell's characters in *The F.J. Holden*.

Really, that is that in fact. Len and Barbara of *Love Letters* might well be Kevin and Anne of *The F.J. Holden* a few years on. Len works in a small paint warehouse in Newcastle, frequents the pub and the club and one night comes home smearing, from some self-inflicted wound and being up Barbara on the stairs that she has been told at the club making up to Doc. Doc gets no further mention so Len says about him. The next day Chris leaves, returning to Sydney and the ramshackle house of her father — the mother has left, and no wonder — and her sub-teen sister Maureen. Barbara goes out a bit with other men, Len goes out a bit with other girls. There is one startling scene, introduced unceremoniously, in which he comes to blows with a dishevelled lady in the club. This may be interpreted to show that Len is a killer, or perhaps it can be fact, but if so it is not followed up. There is also the implication that Len has a low boring point at work, as he slouches around the shelves of the warehouse with a sheet of orders, speaking at his computer.

If this were just a story of a marriage spinning down the middle it would be unimportant. Two things make it different. One is that Len starts writing letters to Barbara, in places totally unlike any he would use in the normal course of communication, and expressing emotions, she tells a girl friend in the pub, that are totally unlike him. Stephen Wallcott, the director/writer, says he found the bundle of love letters on which he based his film in an old, run-down house. Perhaps had he

looked further he would have found the model for Len's initial letters in a magazine. When Len takes the Newcastle Flyer to Sydney to spend the weekend with Barbara at her brother's flat he is home almost nothing goes right.

It has to be said that Len and Barbara are far from a jolly pair. Neither of them seeses its Len's case it may be that he is getting sick, of which he complains occasionally, possibly easy smoking. And since Barbara is a bit drunk she denies and sings to herself, but not joyfully.

The weekend is not a success. They fail to make it into bed. An audience may be inclined to hope that Barbara will have the sense not to take Len back, and so leave

her father and his surely sister for some place where she can take advantage of her good looks, learn to speak grammatically and perhaps open a savings bank account.

I don't mean to be flippant. At the time, I took the film very seriously, and admired its direction, costume work, musical score and sets, at times, the writing. Away from it, I am not so sure. And it has one flaw that has nothing to do with any of the factors mentioned above. It happens that Bryan Brown, who plays Len and Kevin McQuade who plays Barbara, are just too much alike — sharp profiles, dark hair, knowing expressions. Physical control is missing, and it takes something from the film.

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Some Approaches to drama in schools



Errol Bray, *Are We Heroes? Experiences in Educational Drama*, University of NSW Press, Sydney 1976

David Self, *A Practical Guide to Drama in the Secondary School*, Ward Lock Educational, London 1975.

Teacher, Teacher and Other Plays, Apprehensions, Actions and Other Plays and Requests for a Playwright and Other Plays Script Play Series, Scholastic Book Services

Last time I wrote about educational drama books I was pleading for a few less prescriptive and a few more experience-based books on the subject. With Errol Bray's *Are We Heroes?* my prayer was more or less answered. Published last year, this book resonates with emerging bookness the experiences of a teacher discovering the possibilities of educational drama in state-city high schools of Sydney. Mr Bray may be wrong on the side of modesty when he describes himself as having launched into this as a novice, for he continues his on persons favourably with those of drama graduates who prefer to deal with "meat" rather than rough fish.

Historically in New South Wales there was no career in this book, too, as it pays tribute to the kind of work Dr Oliver Pugh, an educational drama co-ordinator at the University of NSW, has been doing. It stands to reason that the emergence of specialist graduates such as Mr Bray from the University and CAE drama courses must have a state-wide impact in the schools.

This book, then, is more a diary than a textbook and has to be read through project by project, page by page. Much of it is edited written on the straight diary form with the details of each day and the names

of participants freely mentioned. This does qualify it as one of the very attractive features of the book, as it allows the writer to explore very frankly his own failures in both discipline and ideas. Sometimes this is done in the body of the text and sometimes in marginal postscripts. Examples for individual projects, such as "Double Cubed" in 24 scenes, are printed, then the diary takes up the development of the course.

There is an intriguing account, too, of Mr Bray's experiences as a drama demonstration teacher — especially a daunting encounter with 120 girls at Penrith High School. But he turns these large-scale events into valuable learning moments for himself at least, and ends up rejecting Peter Blake's idea of "classical" as a drama class for his own "Big Fish".

Secondary teachers will doubtless be interested in Mr Bray's study of *Ofelia* at Cleveland Senior High, but they would be ill-served to turn to it without reading of the kinds of experience which make possible his impressionistic approach to these students in this play. This is a book to be read right through, not least for the open and optimistic coding in which the writer rejects conventional notions of success and failure for educational drama in favour of group standards about the value of any exercise.

Another pleasantly open book is David Self's *A Practical Guide to Drama in the Secondary School*, one of the best practical manuals on creative drama that I have ever read. It begins with a few wistful notes for the weary or over-enthusiastic drama teacher, then goes into eleven succinct chapters, heavily sub-divided, which are concerned with ideas and approaches to "creative" rather than "classical" drama. On this last it provides a source of refuge, advice and advice for the harassed classroom drama teacher, often revealed as misunderstood by his colleagues.

Mr Self's book, moreover, goes ways for the student of educational drama, providing as it does cautious scholarly, public service, and literary references on the subject. It challenges some of Bruce Wigg's theories on relating drama exercises to the experience of local students, and makes contact and intelligible use of quotations from other experts. I especially like the use in relaxation from Pamberlin-Wilg and Clagg to the effect that "Just because we have had a drama lesson it doesn't mean we can be as well off the way to the science lab." Self goes on to examine the conflict between relaxation and concentration in the drama lesson.

While the writer goes through the various stages of working with secondary (and by implication some area secondary) students, his most fascinating chapter is then called "Shaping a lesson". The tricky question of approaching local students is explored, as are possible approaches to discipline and the extent to which a teacher ought participants in the actual classroom. On this latter point, Mr Self is surprisingly unbigoted, although his favourite kind of drama teacher is clearly a flexible and reasonably confident person, who may take a back seat when appropriate.

While the bulk of this book is taken up with handy exercises and approaches to private creative drama, the writer readily admits that some secondary students are of being poets, novelists and the like. They run into danger of distancing themselves from their roles and involvement because of newly found sophistication and self-consciousness. It is at this point, argues Self, that the teacher can validly introduce "literariness" drama, which aims to communicate to an audience and looks toward us and result. Even so, one should be wary of submitting to the conventionally scripted play, so commendably self-aware and documentary drama techniques are suggested in a chapter called "Playwriting". Finally, there are some sensible words about the actual performances which are traditionally expected of drama teachers' students. Lining with other departments, getting something out of the whole exercise — all such matters are approached sensitively. This is a superb, detailed, and totally useful book.

By contrast the American educational drama books we continue to receive, more directed largely to performance in *Requests for a Playwright and Other Plays*, the assumption is that students will want to do plays which deal with serious adolescent problems. *The White Case*, a Marcus Wolby play, approaches such problems with self-righteous intensity, and while students may be interested to see scripted versions of television problems they have had — especially in the sensitive TV play *Teacher, Teacher* by Elissa Carroll — it is hard to see what we drama teachers could make of these plays as drama (as opposed to, say, social studies) classes. Much of the dialogue is in general American, and the problems perhaps too localized. But more to the point, the roles are written for the kind of understated adult TV, reactions which would be beyond the scope of the average secondary student. I do not mean to restrict this kind of writing, but it is hard to see where it fits into the drama classes envisaged by its editors.

GUIDE



NEW SOUTH WALES

ACTORS COMPANY (060 2503)

The Tink of Koolberr, by Tony Wright and May Alfrey, directed by Tony Wright. Children's production, to 10 Sept.

City Sagar, by Stephen Polakoff, directed by Michael Kelle, and *Ghosts*, by Henrik Ibsen, directed by Matthew O'Sullivan. Playing in repertory from 7 Sept.

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (21 6611)

The Dair Woodward Road Poppet. Workshop, primary schools near Sydney metropolitan area, from 19 Sept.

New England Ensemble, chamber music trio comprising Andrew Lorror, Robert Harris, Jane Livers, primary schools and adult concerts, central western New South Wales. 26-30 Sept.

Ray Price Quartet, primary and secondary schools and adult concerts, Hunter and New England districts, 19-25 Sept., Hunter and north coast districts, 9-14 Oct.

Modern Music Theatre, primary schools near, Hunter, New England and north coast districts, from 19 Sept.

Big N. An Opera for 8000 Bikes, devised and performed by Howard Spoor, presented by arrangement with the State Opera of South Australia. Secondary schools and adult concerts, metropolitan, south coast, Riverina and central western N.S.W., from 12 Sept.

The Bull & Bush Show, from Frank Souter's Theatre Restaurant, William Seaton, Sydney, directed by George Carden, with Rod Moore, Lughlan Watts, Donna Lee, John Harris, Julie Godfrey. touring south coast, Riverina and western districts of N.S.W. from 12 Sept.

AUSTRALIAN OPERA (26 2976)

Sydney Opera House (2 0333)

Opera Theatre, Macleish (Yards) in Italian. 1 Sept, 3 Sept (am), 7 Sept, 10 Sept (am), 12, 16 Sept. Conductor, Carlo Felice Cilliani, producer, John Copley-designer, Stefano Lazzarola, musical producer, Michael Beauchamp. With Elizabeth Connell, John Shaw, Lambert Padua, Aaron Austin, Donald Shinkler or Clifford Gray.

Jon Garofalo (Archer) in English. 2, 3, 10 Sept (am), 14, 20, 24 Sept. (am), 1 Oct.

(am). Conductor, Peter Robinson, producer, John Copley, designer, Michael Sweeney (costume) and Henry Bardon (set). musical producer, Eike Neidhardt. With Robert Gard, Dennis Olsen, Heather Legg or Jennifer Birmingham, Hans Widan. Gram Duckson, Isabel Buchanan, Graeme Ewer, Neil Womers-Smith.

The Flying Dutchman (Wagner) in German. 1 Sept (am), 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, 17 Sept (am), 19, 21, 22, 23, 24 Sept (am), 3 Oct., 8 Oct (am). Conductor, Carlo Felice Cilliani or George Psalti, producer, Peter Petersen, designer, Scott Brinkman, musical producer, Eike Neidhardt. With Robert Allison or Raymond Myers, Leon Koppel-Wunder or Nancy Grant, Roma Ruckliff or Lesley Stoddin, Ronald Dowd or Reginald Byrne, Robin Donald or Aaron Austin, Neil Womers-Smith or Donald Shinkler.

The Goodfather (Gilbert and Sullivan) in English. 28, 29, 30 Sept, 1 Oct (am), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Oct (am), 10 Oct. Designer, Tim Langford. With Jennifer Birmingham, Rhonda Bruce, Meryl Purton, Rosemary Gunn, Cynthia Johnston, Rosalie Ruckliff, Lesley Stoddin, Graeme Ewer, Robert Gard or Paul Farnes, John Germain, Alan Lough, Ronald Macgregor, Dennis Olsen.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE. Newcastle (21 3841)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Edward Albee, directed and designed by John Gully, with Tony Gorder, Mervyn Wallace, Leslie Van Dorn and Helen Gray. 19-24 September.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (089 8322)

Doon, by Richard Telnick, with Jan Cullen and Ray Anderson. Touring primary schools, Wollongong, south coast, Riverina and central western districts of NSW from 19 Sept.

Workshops at N.E.A. (Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., to end of year.

BONDI PAVILION THEATRE (30 7211)

Popovers, a history of the world devoted and presented as an exercise by 40 students of the school of fine arts, Alexander Mackie College, and the drama department, University of New South Wales. 20 Sept to 4 Oct.

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC (27 4208 or 27 9271)

Orpheus Rex (Stravinsky) and *Apollonius (Herc)* in English. Director, Anthony Revell, designer, William Pasanovic.

Orpheus Rex conducted by Robert Fidler, with Ronald Dowd. *Apollonius* conducted by Richard Bell. 14, 19, 22 October.

ENSEMBLE (029 3877)

Don Mervin God, by Bella and Samuel Spewack, directed by Haydn Gordon, designed by Doug Anderson. With John McInnis, William Christie, Les Kasperian, Linda Hamer. Continuing.

GENESIA (027 3021)

The Unrepentant Giant, by Agatha Christie, directed and designed by Ray Aremworth. With Gaynor Mitchell, Patrick Ward, Neil Nixon. To 24 Sept.

An Ideal Husband, by Oscar Wilde, directed and designed by Dean Allen. From 1 Oct.

HER MAJESTY'S (212 2441)

A Chorus Line, original production conceived, choreographed and directed by Michael Bennett, co-choreographer, Bob Avian, book by James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante, music by Marvin Hamlisch, lyrics by Edward Kleban, choreography and direction recreated for Australia by Mary Kay Lee and Jeff Harkin. Can to 30 Continuing.

HILARA AND COFFEE THEATRE (089 7932)

Hallo London, devised by John Howett, with John Howett, Peter Parkman. Chorus Pegg. Continuing.

MARION STREET (089 3164)

Seven Match by Martin Worth and Peter Tedham, directed by Alister Duncan, designed by Brian Nickless. With Barry Lovett, Sue Walker, Lynn Burrows. From 6 Oct.

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (233 1618)

Alce, written and directed by Richard Bradshaw, and *Wanda*, devised by the company and directed by Richard Bradshaw. Outer suburban Sydney schools holiday season, Parramatta area to 3 Sept, Sutherland Civic Centre, 5-10 Sept, touring schools, north coast, New South Wales. 12-30 Sept.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE FESTIVAL (089 8322)

East for Power or Pinks at Parramatta, women and directed by Michael Baddy, with Alan Harvey, John Allen, Anne Smiler. Continuing.

NEWTREATH (319 3021)

Captain of Capewick by Carl Zuckmayer, directed by Jack Lory, designed by Robert Shaw. From 10 Sept.

MUSIC LOST THEATRE RESTAURANT (977 5285)

The *Gloria Dean Show*, produced by William Orr, with Bryan Davis, W.P. Brennan, David Calhoun. Continuing.

NIMROD (99 5801)

Uptown Jack, by Jim McNeil, directed by Ken Harter, designed by Larry Raywood From 11 Sept.

Demons *Penelope*, by David Hane, directed by Richard Wherrett. Continuing.

OLD FOTE (661 6121)

Drama Theatre, Opera House. *The Jew As No Jew* by Louis Eisen, directed by Peter Callaghan, designed by Anne Fisher. With Rex Hutton, Helen Morse, Neil Fitzpatrick, Jean Bruce, Peter Collingwood, Robin Bowring, Margaret Ford. At Theatre From 7 Sept.

Mothers and Fathers, by Joseph Massola, directed by Bill Redmond, designed by Mike Bridges From 21 Sept.

York Theatre, Seymour Centre. *The Norman Conquests* (Table Manners, Living Together and Round and Round the Garden), by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Robert Quentin, designed by Larry Raywood. With Allen Tuba, Tony Llewellyn-Jones, Peter Adams, Veronica Long, Jennifer Hagan. Judi Farr. Trilogy continuing in repertoire.

OSCAR HOLLYWOOD PALACE THEATRE RESTAURANT, Sun Show (329 4435)

The *Glenn Stearns*, devised and written by Gary Davis and Jon Feltayson, directed and staged by Jon Feltayson. With Joe Miller, Geraldine Morrow, Maggie Stuart, Roma Coleman, Lyn Lovell. Continuing.

OTHEATRE, Perth (947 21 5135)

The *Entertainer*, by John Osborne, directed by Richard Brooks, designed by Arthur Dicks, with Ron Hackel. At Embassy Theatre, Perth, 14-25 Sept, Civic Centre, Bankstown. 26 Sept to 2 Oct, Manildra Rehabilitation Centre, Perth. 2-9 Oct.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (982 0355)

The *Horror Show*, by Steve Gault, directed by Robert Lave. Demons, 1-3 Sept. (Presented by the City Road Youth Theatre. High school pupils, aged 13 to 20). *Parade Night at the Deep North*, by Edward Bond, directed by Boon McGregor, designed by Matthew Lorrimer, presented by Sydney University Dramatic Society. Demons, 7-24 Sept.

SPEAKEASY THEATRE RESTAURANT, Kensington (661 7942)

The *Big Bang Show*, conceived by Hugh Hale and Bryan Brown, directed by Hugh Hale, designed by Cliff Simon. With Peter Corbett, Ross Sharp, John Ewart, Tina Burrell, Victoria Nicolai, Douglas Kingman. Continuing.

THEATRE ROYAL (231 6577 or 231 6411)

Bowery Story, by Marc Camoletto, adapted from the French by Beverly

Cross, directed by Doug Fisher, designed by Bill David, starring Richard O'Sullivan, with Doug Fisher, Shirley Cameron, Kate Short, Aubrey Woodville. To 24 Sept. *Yeh! Yeh! Yeh!* by Sundaram. From 27 Sept.

WHITE HORSE HOTEL, Newtown (34 1952)

A Jolly Number, by Rick Mayer, Penelope Kirby, Peter Stephens and Malcolm Frawley, directed by Ian Tasker, designed by Peter Fisher and Susan Frawley. To 24 Sept.



QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (36 2444)

Cher My Canada, by Ray Cooney. Director Catherine Sparks. To 4 Oct.

CAMPBELL (36 6161)

To See Maria Wilson, by John Ford. Director, Cliff Whitchouse. From 23 Sept.

HER MAJESTY'S (221 2771)

(Overland) *Boiler* — six below. *Bowery Story*, by Marc Camoletto, adapted from the French by Beverly Cross, directed by Doug Fisher. Open 28 Sept.

LA BOITE (36 1912 or 36 1296)

Jack the Ripper, by Ron Fawcett and Dennis de Manne in association with Larry Fawcett and Joe Nichols. Director, Jo Denver. 16-20 Sept.

Antony, by Jean Anouilh. Mable Stagers production. 16-28 Sept.

QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL (221 5980)

It's Not Easy for a Brooklyn, by Gene Sween and Ray Cooney. State tour commences 21 Sept.

From War Cris, Inside Out, QTC secondary schools tour. South East Queensland.

Alexander Moore, Spanish Dancer. Special events series project. 29 Aug-10 Sept.

Run, Run, Run. South East Queensland tour. From 30 Sept.

Swing a Thing. David and Sally Poshon marionettes. Tour continuing in the far north.

After Wood. Australian folk. Tour continuing in South West Queensland.

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (229 1255)

at Her Majesty's Theatre. *Coppelia*, choreography recreated by Leslie White and Cyril Jones. Production and additional choreography by Harry Hopfinger. Society. Kenneth Rayson, solos. Panels. Corder. To 10 Sept.

André for Phoenix including *André* — choreographer, Charles Leger. *Corner Out of Case* — choreographer, Peter

Duffy, *The Porter* — choreographer, Garth Welch. *Le Fracasso* — choreographer, August Horstmann. 14-17 Sept.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 3861)

The Brass Age, by Thomas Muchamp. Director: Robert Leveyer. With Ron Haddock and Marcella Ruggione. 24 Aug-10 Sept. *Recess*, Sept. (Oct. otherwise). Engaged, by Simon Gray. *Queen*. 25 Oct.

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY (221 7349)

at S G L Theatre. *The Marriage of Figaro*, by Mozart. Produced by Anthony Beach. Conductor, Graeme Young, designer, Allan Lutz. With Dennis White, Arthur Johnson, Sally Robinson, Max Orman, Barry Clarke, Gloria Egan and John Ryall. 23, 28, 30 Sept., 4 & 6 Oct.

It's Tomorrow, by Wendy Prosser, John Thompson. Conductor, George Taitel. Designer, Peter Cooke. With Noel Kaynor, Philip Ball, Margaret Russell, Paul Neal. Robin Harrington and Barry Clarke. 29 Sept., 1, 2, 3, 7 Oct.

TWILIGHT NIGHT (32 5889)

The Spider Web, by Agatha Christie. Director, Babsie Stephens. 2-7 Sept. *Sonnet at Sanssouci*, by Patrick White. Director, Joan Whalley. 21 Sept.-13 Oct.



ACT

CANBERRA PLAYHOUSE (49 6889)

Australian Stage Company. *Never the Twain*, an environmental based on the works of Rudyard Kipling and Bertolt Brecht, compiled by John Wright and directed by Neil Cherry. With Ralynn Archer, Howard Spier, Lyndan Tarricone, George Winkley and Michael Winkley. 13-15 Sept.

A Sketch of the Assassination, by Jack Mulford, AFG production. Directed by Paul Hampton, designed by John Kong. With Max Collier. 19 September-1 October.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 3211)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. To 3 September.

Tarantula! Tarantula! Gilbert and Sullivan musical revue by Ian Taylor. Director, Ted Craig. Designer, David Bennett. With Jon Long and John Fawcett. 6-10 September. *Swahili* by Sundaram. 10-26 September.

HIROSCUS THEATRE RESTAURANT (21 2121)

Crucial of a Lifetime by Ron Fawcett. And

John McKellar, directed by James Heichen with Robert Canova, Doug Williams and Mary Vaccaro. (continuing)

THEATRE THEATRE (47 422)

Canberra Repertory Society

The Riders of the Mahoe by Mike Gale, directed by Rodney Wilson To 3 September

Two/4th Night opens 4 October



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

LITTLE THEATRE

Godot and Other Myntones Revue adaptation of Beckett pieces directed by Steve Brown To 3 Sept - 4 Oct

OPERA THEATRE (Formerly Her Majesty's) (51 3293)

Doctor In Love, by Richard Gordon with Robin Newell and Geoffrey Daux To 27 Sept - 19 Oct

REDISHED

Tringe Scripted for Guy Marnett written and directed by David Allen To 23 Sept, Thurs to Sat

SHERIDAN THEATRE (267 3751)

Adelaide Theatre Group *The Runaway* by Harold Pinter, directed by Malcolm Haylock Weds and Sat to 24 Sept

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY (51 5011)

Amie Got Your Gun, music and lyrics by Irving Berlin Directed by Colin George, designed by Rodney Ford movement by Michael Peller, with Dorothy Vernon and Kevin Miller To 24 Sept

STATE OPERA (352 3738 or 352 3364)

Festival Theatre (51 3291)

MMS Playoffs, Gilbert and Sullivan Conductor, Myer Friedman, director, Adrian Skelton, James Cooper with Edward Macdonald, Patsy Hanningway, Thomas Edmunds, John Wood, David Brennan, Norma Knight, Keith Hampton

UNION HALL

Adelaide University Guild

Double Dealer, by William Congreve, by Graham North To 14 Sept - 4 Oct



TASMANIA

TASMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (23 7996)

Company 1 *Car and Dog*, for infants playing North West coast region of Tasmania

Company 2 *Master Peir's Puppet Show*, Primary Schools, North West region of Tasmania To 13 Sept - 25 Nov

THEATRE ROYAL (24 6266)

The Twentieth and All That Jazz, a musical collection with John Deirdrick, Caroline Gilmore and John O'May To 3 Sept

Doctor In Love, by Richard Gordon with Robin Newell and Geoffrey Daux To 27 Sept

The Club, by David Williamson MTC production, directed by Rodney Fisher, designed by Shaun Garcia From 26 Sept



VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE

(247 2828)

Richard Bradshaw and His Shadow Puppets To 18, 24 Sept

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (247 7153)

From Factory Waters season of Jack Hibbert's *A Branch of the Imagination* To 11 Sept

A Proposition of Dates, by the Lead Balloon Dance Company From 15 Sept

COMEDY THEATRE (063 3311)

Funny People, by Mike Scott, directed by Jeffrey Campbell, designed by Patrick Robertson With George Layton and Bruce Spence

THE HOOFLA THEATRE FOUNDATION

Playbox Theatre (83 4888)

The Direction of Benjamin Franklin, by Steve J Spence, directed by Richard Wharfed, designed by Larry Eastwood With Gordon Chater Persephone Productions Continues

LA MAMA (247 6883)

Tenth Anniversary Festival

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (409 6234)

Waters, Flare's a Circus in My Soap, directed by Gary Patterson To 3 Sept

Last Laughs First Birthday Party with all star cast To 30 Sept Returns of *Flare Flare's a Circus in My Soap* 15 Sept

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (643 1903)

Alchemist: The Merchant of Venice, by William Shakespeare, directed by John Sumner To 3 Sept *Pigeonhole*, directed by Ray Lawler Designed by Hugh Coleman From 15 Sept

Roadside Street: The Club, by David Williamson, directed by Rodney Fisher, designed by Shaun Garcia To 24 Sept

The Bandstand From The Bush (and Other Remains) by Henry Lawson Performed by Robin Rainey From 20 Sept

St. Martin's Ashes, by David Rudkin, directed by Mick Rodger, designed by Steve Nolan, with Lynette Caplan, Jan Fickelson, Jan Fickell and Bruce Myles To 24 Sept

PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE (352 6400)

David the Giant Killer, by Jane Epstein

PRINCESS THEATRE

Wander Women, by and with Reg Livermore, directed by Peter Bailey Presented by Eric Bray Continues

ST KILDA PALAIS (04 9638)

Les Femmes, Musées in a Cape and Bell, The End 14-20 Sept *Peter and the Wolf* 20-30 Sept

VICTORIA STATE OPERA (41 5861)

Paper & Flowers & Things as *The Three Lines of Penelope Papers* by Peter Narroony Continues on school tour, Melbourne metropolitan area



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT (32 1392)

The New Year Show, (change of programme) With Max Gray, Alan Dale, Peter Dean, Bobby Hanna, Marie-Anne Korman and the Shirley Halliday Show Girls Continues

HOLE IN THE WALL (21 2403)

Long Day's Journey into Night by Eugene O'Neill Director, Raymond O'Connor With Neville Tonda and Margaret Anderson To 24 Aug - 24 Sept

PLAYHOUSE (25 3344)

Downstairs Double Edge, by Peter Wilton and Linda Dutton Director, Andrew Kerr, designer, Anna French With Carole Skinner (Dennis Miller and Lesley Wright) To 30 Sept *Off With and Mrs*, by John Steinbeck Director, Anne Nimmo To 15 Oct

REGAL Saloons (81 1277)

The Twentieth and All That Jazz, a musical collection with John Deirdrick, Caroline Gilmore and John O'May Opens 3 Sept

W.A. BALLET COMPANY (33 6888)

Octagon Theatre Set Point & Love Match, by Leigh Warren *The Passions*, an abstract ballet by Peter Durrill New York by Garth Walsh To 24 Sept, 28 Sept - 1 Oct

W.A. THEATRE COMPANY

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